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ABSTRACT

This report examines the first year of operation of the 21 Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAAs) that were established in rural Alaska by the passage of Alaska Senate Bill 35 in 1975. The report is divided into four sections. Section 1 presents background information and an overview of the study and of the events that led up to the passage of SB 35 and the subsequent establishment of the 21 REAAs. Section 2 presents information collected for the study through survey questionnaires sent to REAA board members and superintendents and through analysis of REAA board minutes and minutes of the State Board of Education. Also included are excerpts from a panel discussion by several REAA superintendents and a case study of community perceptions in one REAA. Section 3 consists of seven articles written by various people involved in the study and by other individuals involved with issues related to the development and operation of REAAs. Section 4 presents excerpts from a seminar conducted in November 1977 to review the first draft of the report, to discuss findings related to SB 35 and its implementation, and to identify related issues in need of further study. (Author/JG)

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NEW SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN RURAL ALASKA: A REPORT ON THE REAAs AFTER ONE YEAR

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While the principal investigator assumes ultimate responsibility for this report, the opinions expressed by consultants or authors of contributed chapters are their own. Funds for this project were provided by the Ford Foundation and the State of Alaska.

*Questionnaire data were reported without reference to person or district.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT TO CNER SB 35 STUDY

When we embarked on this adventure more than two years ago, we began a quiet revolution in Alaska's educational system. The decentralization of the State-Operated School System took the energies and efforts of many, many people in urban and rural areas. These people with different backgrounds and interests worked together to make the transition effective.

We shared in common, I believe, one major premise--the belief that our work would result in improving the quality of education in the unorganized borough. Much has been accomplished in redistributing and rebalancing the powers and responsibilities of the many groups involved in delivering education. The change has resulted in greater efficiency in educational decision making and problem solving already, and promises to do more so in the future. Also extremely important is that it is resulting in the eradication of the unfortunate remnants of the dual system which functioned for so long in Alaska. We can only take pride in that result.

In choosing to decentralize the former State-Operated School System, Alaskans went against the national trend of consolidation of schools into larger districts. Ironically, those elsewhere who chose the other route are now re-examining their choice while we, whatever concerns we may have about the future, have no regrets about the basic direction we have chosen.

The future will bring problems to be resolved; that seems to be in the nature of human enterprises. But through resolving conflict we can grow as individuals and as members of a school system of which we already have every right to be very proud. The fresh enthusiasm of the new districts is helping revitalize our system state-wide. New ways of problem solving, new methods of program delivery are being explored, and a variety of approaches is being developed.

Increased regional and local control mean that people have greater freedom to make their own decisions, and included in that freedom is the freedom to make their own mistakes and to learn by those. It would be naive to see the new districts as "mistake-proof." Instead, we should try efforts, such as this study, to analyze and examine potential and actual problems.

As we continue to strive to provide quality education to our children, we can profit much by sharing with one another both our triumphs and our failures, so that ultimately we all work together towards our main goal: providing the best possible education to all the children of the state, regardless of where they live or who they are.

Marshall Lind
Commissioner of Education

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CHAPTERS

Kathryn A. Hecht

The twenty-one Regional Educational Attendance Areas began their second year of operation while this report was being prepared. The report focuses on the REAAs' first year; places that year in a larger historic context; and considers future potentials. Selected statements and commentary (followed by the chapter title) appear below.

> This is not the first time rural Native parents have exercised control of education locally. [Historical Review and Perspective]
>
> The process of setting the regional boundaries for REAA districts was completed within five months after SB 35 was signed into law. [Chronology of Events: Decentralization of the Alaska State-Operated School System]
>
> *SB 35 was a perfect example of how things should work. It melded the University of Alaska, citizens and legislators into a group which worked with amazing rapidity.* [Perspectives on Progress]
>
> In a survey, board chairpersons differed most from superintendents in noting an increased interest in local government related to their experiences with the REAA system. [Survey of REAA Superintendents and Board Members]
>
> *...SB 35 gives rural residents increased hope for better schools.* [Survey of REAA Superintendents and Board Members]
>
> REAA boards met an average of 13 times the first year. The range in number of meetings convened was five to 31. At the end of the first year, women held 29% of total Board memberships. [Analysis of the Rural Educational Attendance Area Board Minutes During Their First Year]
>
> Finance was the most frequently mentioned REAA issue in State Board of Education minutes in FY '77, followed by Lau Compliance and BIA School Transfer. [Analysis of State Board of Education Minutes]
>
> *We feel like we have better operations and are doing a better job with kids than we were prior to the passage of the legislation.* [REAA Superintendents Address the First Year]

...one was able to discern a central theme linking all of the reasons given for the necessity for local control of education to a more general community concern. That concern being the reduction of influence of what are perceived as culturally and socially irrelevant bureaucracies.... [Community Perspectives of a REAA: A Case Study Emphasizing Cultural Implications]

Overwhelmingly, the CSCs in every REAA reported they felt there was a need for their existence. [Survey of Alaska Community School Committees]

A sense of pride showed in their feeling that 'this is our school, it no longer belongs to some agency far away,' and in their awareness that they were moving things in a direction they thought appropriate. [Evaluation of Secondary Education in One REAA]

Although REAA revenue for operating expenses comes from state and federal sources, the amount of state revenues for REAAs is partially determined by budget decisions of city and borough school district boards. [Financing the REAAs]

...many residents expressed concern about moving too fast; while they embraced the idea of regional school districts, they felt that the concept required the test of time before jumping to yet another new form of government. [SB 35 and Regional Government]

While the optimism expressed by the Commissioner is significant and evidences an attitude of receptivity toward transfer by the State, acting on behalf of and in conjunction with the REAAs, the actual situation with regard to unification of the system does not appear to be as promising as he expressed. [Progress on the Transfer of BIA Schools Since the Passage of SB 35]

The price of teaching in a REAA seemed to be, in many boards' and administrators' minds, subjugation of individual civil liberities to the will of the community. [A Teacher Perspective on Decentralization]

Whether the payoff comes in one year, five, or ten, everybody's happier, if for no other reason than that the problems and solutions are closer to home. [Independence Brings Problems, Triumphs]

I've viewed the local control issue as one thing--the access to the political system in order to influence the quality of education. That to me is the essence of local control. [Seminar: Summary and Forecast]

PART I -- BACKGROUND

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

Kathryn A. Hecht

In 1975, Senate Bill 35 was passed by the Alaska Legislature.[1] That act led to the organization of 21 Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAAs) in the Unorganized Borough of rural Alaska. This was followed by the election of school boards in January and February, 1976. The REAA boards assumed their full powers in July that same year. These few simple facts represent a great event in Alaskan history. This event was seen by many as the culmination of a struggle for local control of education and the beginning of an opportunity to provide quality education for all Alaskan children.

Purpose and Rationale

This report reflects both the sense of completion and the excitement of initiation. The first purpose of the report is to complete an analysis process begun by the Center for Northern Educational Research (CNER) in 1973. It will fulfill CNER's obligation to follow up on the results of its 1974 report to the Alaska Legislature on Prehigher Education in the Unorganized Borough: Analysis and Recommendations.[2] As a follow-up study, this report examines the implementation of legislation which the 1973-74 research activities helped to generate. The second purpose of this report is to describe the first year of operation of 21 regional school districts and elected school boards in rural Alaska.

The impetus for this historic happening developed in rural Alaska, with its mostly Native populations, and grew in strength in the early seventies. Most often described as an issue of local control, this movement spoke to phasing out the Alaska State-Operated School System (ASOSS) and enabling school boards elected by and responsible to local communities to have more control. Local control was desired as a means to improve the quality of education by making it more responsive to local needs. Therefore the passage of SB 35 and the creation of the REAAs can be viewed as the beginning of a new phase of local control of education in rural Alaska.

The achievement of the means, as these events signified, does not necessarily assure the desired end--quality education. In speaking to this point as well as those mentioned above, CNER hopes to record significant events as well as focus constructive attention on the REAAs as the latest phase in Alaska's evolving educational system.

The REAAs constitute 21 different emerging educational units, each influenced by a different set of conditions--cultural, economic, and geographic. The diverse conditions encompass factors unique to the logging camps in southeast Alaska; the widely separated islands of the Aleutians; the vast areas

of the interior; and the northwest coast. Local control was intended to allow educational development to adapt to these widely differing situations. The experiences of any one REAA could be predicted to be unique in at least some aspects. Ideally, therefore, a study of the first year should include a sub-study on each REAA. Limited staff and resources, coupled with the time and distances involved in Alaskan travel, did not allow this study to approximate this ideal.

Procedures

Within the limitations described above, two methods were selected to meet the report purposes. First, CNER project staff sought data for the report by direct means, such as questionnaires and a case study, and by collecting already existing public information such as board minutes and newspaper clippings. Second, CNER invited others in the state who had investigated an aspect of REAA development to contribute their findings to this report. This invitation was offered as a vehicle to more widely disseminate their findings, as well as a way of beginning to integrate statewide interests and information. This second method gave this report a far more comprehensive character than it would have had without such cooperation. Those working on related studies within CNER made similar contributions to the report.

It must be stressed that this report is limited in scope and, consequently, it raises as many questions as it may answer. It will be successful if it furthers interest and dialogue. Hopefully, it also will serve as a source of data upon which to design future studies.

Organization of the Report

The body of the report is divided into four sections: background material, analysis of data collected by CNER for this report, contributed articles by others doing work related to the new districts, and a summary and forecast which includes a critical discussion of the report, legislative concerns, and future research needs.

The background section begins with this overview. It is intended to present a rationale for the study, its limitations, and the procedures used. Next, an historical perspective gives readers a contextual setting in which to view the materials to come--how the year under study fits in with the larger picture of educational change in Alaska. The time-line presents an ordering of events since CNER's earlier study and subsequent publication. The chronology begins in January, 1974, at the time CNER's Unorganized Borough report was presented to the legislature, and takes the reader through the passage of SB 35 and up to the official start of the new REAAs in July, 1976. To complete the introductory section, key persons who have

been involved in the local control movement over the last five years were invited to write their perspectives on progress since 1974 as a way of emphasizing the incredible amount of change that has occurred in such a short time. Accomplishments and successes, as well as emerging issues, are highlighted in the conclusion to the introductory section, and are re-emphasized throughout the report.

The second section of the report includes information directly collected for the study and analyzed by the CNER staff. This section contains the information obtained from the survey questionnaires sent to REAA board members and superintendents. Unfortunately, practical limitations required the use of mail questionnaires, which is known to be an inefficient way to collect data. REAA Board Minutes and Minutes of the State Board of Education were used as substantiating or secondary data sources for reviewing attitudes and issues. The analyses of these minutes are presented in this section. A panel discussion by several REAA superintendents is also included.

The questionnaire survey and analyses of the minutes allows broad, rather than in-depth, coverage to all REAAs. Therefore, to balance these data with more in-depth information, a case study was done in one REAA. Conversations with parents, teachers, school administrators and board members were used to focus on what was called "perceived quality of education" and how it may or may not have been affected by the creation of the REAAs and their first working year.

The next section, contributed chapters, was provided by others in CNER and state-wide who have been working on related issues. This feature allowed the study to explore many more areas than its limited resources would have permitted and also provided an opportunity for related work to be disseminated. One contributed chapter deals with the creation of REAAs as it affects and is affected by municipal development in the Unorganized Borough. This area was emphasized in the earlier CNER study. The chapter was written by a staff member of the Department of Community and Regional Affairs. A student from the University of Alaska-Southeast has conducted her own survey of the community school committees and her analysis is presented. An in-depth study of one REAA's new secondary education program was done as a dissertation. The article presented, based upon that study, provides coverage of this important issue. From within CNER, a brief survey of the finance issues concerning REAA schools is presented by the principal investigator of CNER's school finance study. An adjunct CNER staff member discusses the REAAs as related to BIA schools and current issues in school transfer policies. Other contributed chapters discuss teacher issues in the REAAs and a general review of the new districts and their progress.

The final chapter is intended as both a summary and forecast and is based upon a unique approach. Those contributing to the report plus a few selected

persons were invited to a seminar at CNER at the time the draft materials of the report were ready. This group was asked to review the materials as a whole and to discuss their contributions and the information provided the Center. They also were asked to discuss their mutual findings as they relate to possible need for additional or revised legislation and to other issues in need of further study. The transcript of this seminar was edited, and selected remarks are included in the final section of the report.

Appendices to the report include the survey questions, selected news clippings on the REAAs in their first year, a brief description of additional studies concerning REAAs, and a map of Alaska school districts.

Notes

1. SB 35 or Senate Bill 35 is the popular name for State Laws of Alaska, Chapter No. 124, as amended by FCCS HCS CSSB 35, 1975.

2. Frank Darnell, Kathryn Hecht, and James Orvik, Prehigher Education in the Unorganized Borough: Analysis and Recommendations (Fairbanks: University of Alaska, Center for Northern Educational Research, 1974).

HISTORICAL REVIEW AND PERSPECTIVE

Frank Darnell

The advent of Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAAs) prompts a review of the history of rural education in Alaska. Such a review is intended to provide a background of previous events and conditions as a means to put the present system into historical perspective. The scope of the review must necessarily be constrained as it is one among several in a collection of papers on REAAs. The review is a means to set the stage for the papers that follow. Historical events bearing on rural education have been described, therefore, in such a way that the problems of implementing a unique legislative act pertaining to Alaska education can be resolved by practitioners and policy makers of today by understanding the consequences of the activities of practitioners and policy makers of yesterday.

Historical Review

The implementation of a form of local control of education in rural Alaska in the year 1976 brought rural education full cycle in little over forty years. It was in 1932 that the Territorial Legislature abolished the Uniform School Act of 1917, an act that had established local school boards and vested them with authority to operate schools in local communities throughout Alaska generally free of territorial administrative and instructional constraints. And although it can be documented that locally administered territorial school districts were initially established for non-Native children, in reality the territorial schools that developed in the thirties and the forties acquired Native enrollments that eventually exceeded the federal school system established exclusively for Native pupils. The reasons why this happened are not only of historical interest but also bear on the nature and future of REAAs today.

The general organizational concept for rural education that persisted from 1932 until REAAs came into existence in 1976 actually originated in the Uniform School Act of 1917 (an act which was derived from the Nelson Act of 1905), even though provisions for local control were repealed in 1932. The Uniform School Act of 1917 was designed to assure that territorial schools would be constituted along Native-non-Native racial lines and provided "that nothing in the Act shall be construed as referring to or as including schools for Alaska Natives which are now and which may hereafter come under control of the Federal government...."[1]

Enactment of the Uniform School Act in 1917 was the last basic step necessary for the creation of the rural, dual Territorial-Federal school system, vestiges of which may be seen in rural schools still paid for and administered by the BIA. City districts (and now boroughs), as the third element of the structure, were also drawn together through use of common regulations and

came under the unifying control of the Department of Education in the Uniform School Act. In the words of Ernest Gruening, referring to the Act of 1917, "The Territory has made itself wholly responsible for the conduct of the rural schools; it would furnish the greater part of the support of schools in the municipalities."[2] It is true Alaskans had assumed responsibility for a large portion of their educational programs, but Alaskans were far from being "wholly responsible." Care had been taken by members of the Third Territorial Legislature to avoid legal responsibilities for Native education and the pattern that was initiated at that time persists, in part, even to this day.

When the first commissioner assumed his responsibilities as head of the rural system in 1917, there were 46 rural, unincorporated communities with territorial rural schools that enrolled 1,162 pupils and employed 58 teachers. The same year, the Bureau of Education (schools later than that were to come under the Bureau of Indian Affairs) operated 71 rural schools with a total enrollment of 3,500 pupils and a faculty of 133 teachers. Thus, by 1917, the dual system of education for the territory was an established fact.

The policies of the 1920s clearly upheld the concept that the dual system in the rural areas was created on the premise that Natives were to be educated separately from the non-Native population. The official attitude of the government of the territory was reflected in a statement by Commissioner Henderson when he set forth the following policy in his first official report:

> *There are several objections to the maintenance of a unified system of schools for white and Native children, the principle ones being the irregularity of the attendance of Natives and their inability to conform to the standards of the whites in the matter of health and sanitation.... The highest good of both races, however, seems to require separate schools for at least a few decades.... The presence of two distinct races of people and the resulting mixture of blood creates difficulties in supervision and administration.... Where the races must mingle there is usually a certain degree of friction, the parents of white children often keeping them out of school and securing a private teacher in order to avoid the close contact and what they consider the evil resulting therefrom.*[3]

Essentially, policies of the Department of Education may be said to have conformed to the position set forth by the Legislature when the uniform system of schools was established, i.e., the system was to be uniform for "white" children in the territory, but only white children. A policy of the Bureau of Education provided a reciprocal arrangement. Bureau of Education schools were exclusively for Native pupils.

Since policies established during this period favored separate school systems according to race, it is of great significance that wholly contrary to these policies a truly unique and apparently unanticipated organizational structure developed. Separate schools in the traditional sense of two segregated schools within one community did not emerge. The two systems, federal and territorial, were seldom common to individual communities in the rural areas. In the few "urban" communities of the time, separate school facilities did exist; for Native and non-Native children each went to their respective school buildings. However, the original intention of establishing two school systems within each community came about only in a few instances, and segregation within communities did not become widespread. Instead, as time went by, an increasingly larger number of villages contained either a territorial school or a federal school, but not both. Separate school systems did indeed emerge from territorial and federal laws and administrative policies, but each system's schools were in separate villages. Thus, there would be one kind of school in one village, and another kind in the next; and as the racial composition of the territorial schools tended to become increasingly Native, the original purpose of racial segregation became obscure. It should be stressed, however, that this phenomenon took many years before it became a reality. And it was not until 1967 that duplicate school units within a single community completely disappeared. (The community of Northway was the site of the last instance where there were two school units in a single community; one for Natives [BIA] and one for non-Natives [state].)

The reasons which determined whether individual villages eventually settled into federal or territorial systems were not necessarily logical nor consistent. "Historical accident" may be the most comprehensible explanation. Villages with schools established early in the American period, especially former mission schools, originated and remained in the federal system. Also, when new schools in the most remote areas of Alaska with nearly exclusive Native populations were established, they were usually federal; however, some were run by the territory or state from the start. Generally if new schools were added to the territorial system, they were in villages along the coast, on the Aleutian Islands, and on the railroad or highway system; communities usually with at least a segment of non-Native population. In many instances, territorial officials were willing to open schools in communities with a small non-Native population and with enrollment augmented by Native pupils. Another significant factor contributing to the number of schools in the territorial system with a high incidence of Native pupils was brought about by the "drying up" of mining camps. In these cases schools had been established for non-Native population newly arrived to pursue mining, and after the non-Native population moved on, the schools persisted with only the indigenous population using them. An opinion by the territorial attorney general in 1943[1] also tended to increase the number of Native pupils in territorial schools. The opinion was expressed that Native pupils coud not be compelled to attend Native schools if a school for other children was provided in the community.

It is especially significant to note that the informal policy, or arrangement, whereby Native pupils were permitted to enroll in territorial schools when no federal schools existed, eventually led to a greater number of Native pupils in rural territorial and city schools than federal schools. Enrollment composition statistics for the years 1920-1958 are incomplete, but their analysis does reveal that a consistently increasing number of Native students were admitted to federal schools. No appreciable number of non-Native pupils were admitted to federal schools during this period.

Early in the 1930s legislation was enacted that led to changes in administration of the territorial rural schools and saw the end of one phase in the cycle we continue to experience. School boards for rural schools which had been authorized under the Uniform School Act of 1917 were abolished in 1932. By that year 65 rural schools with local boards were in operation. The local boards had been responsible for local operations of the rural schools and for selecting teachers. It appears that the local boards were abolished largely because of insufficient means for controlling funds allotted to them and because of excessive teacher turnover brought about by unnecesary involvement in daily school programs by some board members.[5]

With local boards abolished, the entire operation of all territorial schools outside of organized school districts came under the authority of the Territorial Board of Education. The Territorial Board thus became an operational board and was expected to develop policy for the daily administration of the rural schools, approve faculty members for each rural school, and approve the budget for each rural school. This arrangement continued unchanged until the advent of the State-Operated Schools in 1970, at which time the State-Operated School Board acquired the same responsibilities as those first held by the territorial and state boards. The SOS board retained a similar mode of operation by remaining a central policy-making authority. An exception to complete central authority emerged at this time in the form of local advisory school boards. Their responsibilities and authority were limited and their influence usually negligible.

Programs of education developed by the territory during the period 1920-1958 and the first years of statehood, at which time the State Board of Education continued in the mode of the Territorial Board, reflect almost entirely the educational development of the nation as a whole. Although an increasing number of Native pupils found their way into territorial schools, few, if any, provisions were made to meet the unique educational problems Native students may have had. During this period the territorial curriculum was designed primarily for the non-Native population and thus the seeds of discontent on the part of the Native people were sown. The commissioners of education during this time continued to support the policy that Native education was the responsibility of the federal government although the number of Natives in territorial schools continued to increase. Little mention of the need for Native edu-

cation was made in the biannual reports of the commissioners and when mention was made, it was to stress federal responsibility. As an example, the program of education in rural schools was described by the commissioner of education in 1954:

> *A common program of studies, or course of study, is basic for all Alaska public schools. The standards of instruction in the larger district schools, the larger schools outside districts, the schools on military and other federal reservations and the remote one- and two-room schools are the same.... In general the program of studies as prescribed by the Board of Education compares very favorably with those which are found in schools throughout the nation.*[6]

The common program of studies referred to had been prepared in 1941 by Dr. James Ryan, Commissioner of Education at the time.

As the territory went about its business through a department of education, so did the federal government, first through the Bureau of Education, then the Bureau of Indian Affairs. While the policy of the territory followed the philosophy of Lester Henderson, and programs were developed without concern for Native cultures, the federal system was experiencing the merry-go-round effect of cyclic, contradictory policies. Alaska was not singled out in this process, but simply followed in the wake of federal Indian policy for the country as a whole.

At first, following in the wake of missionaries, federal government officials attempted to eliminate Indian culture in pursuit of their duty to "civilize" the Indian population. The result of this effort was the opposite of the one sought. Programs designed to assimilate often aroused resistance to depart from indigenous culture. Indians tended to withdraw rather than be drawn into the dominant society.

As a result of the now famous Meriam report of 1928, in which federal policies of the previous fifty years were repudiated, Indian education in the Roosevelt administration, under the supervision of John Collier, BIA Commissioner from 1933-1945, reversed the assimilationist policies of the previous fifty years. Collier advocated bilingualism, Native teachers, day schools and preservation of Indian culture.

Collier's efforts were eventually brought to a stop by the Congress, primarily because of a federal shift to a conservative view of Americanism manifested nationally at the close of World War II. The 1950s saw a fundamental return to the assimilationist policies of the first part of the century. Boarding schools were reinitiated and bilingualism set aside. Dillon Myer, the man who supervised Japanese-American relocation during World War II, served as Commissioner of BIA during this period.

In the mid-sixties, with the advent of Lyndon Johnson's New Society and the Kennedy Committee on Indian Education, policies once again were reversed. A multitude of federal programs were initiated at that time, addressed to righting civil wrongs and to promoting advantages of a pluralistic society. They continue until today.

Alaskan BIA schools have followed this vacillating course, and recipients of BIA programs generally suffered from the inconsistencies. What the uncertainty of changing policies eventually guaranteed was Native dissatisfaction, and ultimately precipitated their active role in the movement to return local control in rural Alaska.

Statehood may be considered the ultimate political device by which Alaskans, as equals with other Americans, acquired the potential to control their own affairs. The device did not work well for the return of local control to Alaskan Natives in rural schools. A review of hearings leading to statehood reveals Native education was not an issue in the attainment of statehood and the Statehood Act itself contains nothing of direct significance relative to Native education. For that matter, education was infrequently considered by the framers of the Alaska Constitution and there was no "education lobby" present during its writing.

The provision for education in the Alaska Constitution is quoted frequently in education circles, although the provision is believed by some to be partially unfulfilled to this day. The constitution declares: "The Legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the state, and may provide for other public educational institutions." Separate from this provision, but important to it, are laws defining responsibilities which tie local forms of government directly to the development of educational systems. This is one of the considerations that raises questions concerning the legal appropriateness of REAAs and ultimately may bear on their longevity. (Getches, in his essay Law and Alaska Native Education, a portion of which is quoted below, describes this issue in detail.)[7]

The first few years after Alaska became a state may be considered uneventful relative to development of programs for rural education, but the lack of attention to rural matters in the early years of statehood is not surprising. With so many issues facing residents of the new state, education as a topic only surfaced occasionally. Also, village Alaska had not been "discovered" as a field for social reform or development such as was to happen in the sixties. Following the passage of the Statehood Act nearly five years elapsed before significant attention was given to rural schools. It was in 1962 that a memorandum of agreement between the State and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, assuring some degree of consistency and continuity of program between the two groups, was developed.

Following the development of the memorandum by the State of Alaska and the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the wide circulation of two reports, A Program of Education for Alaskan Natives[8] and Alaska Native Secondary School Dropouts,[9] prepared by Dr. Charles Ray of the University of Alaska, a number of events took place which drew attention to the educational system in rural Alaska. In Ray's reports the need for new curricula was documented. A Governor's Committee on Rural Education, appointed in 1962, issued a report in 1963 (updated in 1966) which urged a single system of rural education. The United States Department of Interior Task Force on Alaska Natives identified the need for special programs of education and suggested a single, distinct administrative structure for rural schools as an essential element necessary to improve education in rural Alaska. And the files of the Department of Education began to include material which revealed a growing concern by the public at large for new programs of education specifically designed for rural schools. Furthermore, state officials agreed in principle to merge the rural schools into a single state-controlled system. Of most importance, it was during this period that Native groups and individual leaders emerged as a viable force. Up until this time no strong voice of the consumer had been heard. Emergence of the Native population in the movement was the previously lacking essential ingredient.

Two quotations from meetings of Native groups at the time serve to illustrate the emergence of Native forces and stress the importance of this new element in the development of new education systems. A meeting of the Tanana Chiefs Conference in 1968 resulted in this report:

> *Improved and more educational opportunities for Native youth has been a principal concern of the Tanana Chiefs Conference since the Conference was revived in 1962.*
>
> *And the year 1968 is no different.*
>
> *Meeting in Fairbanks for the second time this year, the representatives to the Chiefs Conference again tackled education with more vigor than before....*
>
> *The Conference this morning passed a resolution asking the Alaska Federation of Natives to file suit against the United States and the State of Alaska for 'an integrated quality education for all Alaskan Natives in Alaska....'*[10]

At a meeting in Sitka in December 1968, Native spokesmen continued to make known their dissatisfaction with the education system:

> *Natives from across Alaska served notice Thursday night that in their drive for improved rural education,*

they will be satisfied with nothing less than the system of regional high schools, close to the villages they serve and under direction of Native school boards.

Indian, Eskimo and Aleut spokesmen gave their views of the conference on rural education presided over by U.S. Representative Howard W. Pollock, Republican-Alaska, and U.S. Senator-elect Mike Gravel, Democrat-Alaska. The conference was called by the State's congressional delegation to reach a consensus on the recommended allocation of 9.6 million dollars appropriation by Congress for expanding and upgrading the Mt. Edgecumbe school.[11]

The awakening of Native people to power had become a factor in resolving educational problems in Alaska. Pressure by Native groups, representing a large block of voters, had brought Alaska's congressional delegation into the matter.

The decade 1966-1976 has been a period of extreme changes and a return to the local control of forty years earlier. In many ways, however, it is unfair to compare the local control of today with that of four decades past. Today's local control issues and the recognition of special educational needs for Alaska's indigenous population is a subject in its own right. A recent report (Law and Alaska Native Education, Center for Northern Educational Research, 1977) by Mr. David Getches provides a succinct and critical analysis of the past ten years. Because of its currentness and appropriateness to the subject of REAA implementation and this review, an excerpt from Mr. Getches' paper follows verbatim.[12]

Excerpt from Law and Alaska Native Education, pp 27-30.

. . .Many villages apparently felt some of the same impulses for autonomy that moved proponents of statehood. They were, however, at the mercy of the state legislature, which was in a key position to make systemic changes. Displeasure voiced from the politically impotent bush met with little action.

In 1966, the state made a concession aimed at permitting more local direction for rural education. An act of the legislature instituted elective advisory school boards in all communities where state schools were operating.[303] Like their counterparts in the BIA system, the boards had no legal power. Their only "duty" was to "advise and assist the Board of Directors . . . through the local official administering the school." Most of the boards under the Alaska State-Operated School System never functioned effectively. In 1975, some 50 percent of the boards were considered nonfunctional."[305]

The education system for the entire state, outside municipalities (the unorganized borough), had been administered by the State Department of Education. There was not even a statewide policy-making board to address the diverse needs of the area separately from those of the state as a whole. Concern for the clumsy, inefficient system led the legislature to create a state corporation called the Alaska State-Operated School System (ASOSS) in 1970.[307]

ASOSS was a separate quasi-agency charged with responsibility for education throughout the unorganized borough. It was governed by a board of directors appointed by the governor. Six of the nine board members had to be from rural areas, outside boroughs and military reservations.[308] The board was delegated some of the authority which formerly had been exercised by the legislature and the State Board of Education, although the exact relationship between the state and ASOSS board was never clear. Administration of rural schools became separate from the State Department of Education's many other duties. Administrative matters still had to be funnelled through the State Department of Administration, however.

The conception of an entity whose sole responsibility was delivery of education in the unorganized borough may have appeared to be a wise move. At the least it would enable a policy-making board and full-time administrators to focus exclusively on that task. But the fundamental impediment of no localized decision making continued. There was not even a procedure for getting input to the board of directors from advisory school boards.

Because ASOSS was still administering an unwieldly system, great improvement was not forthcoming, nor could it have been expected. The capability of ASOSS for effecting change was severely limited because of its behemoth service area with distant clusters of population and a variety of conditions.

Individualized attention was needed for each of the more than 130 schools served by ASOSS but was out of the question. Native leaders saw little difference in rural education in the state system as viewed from the receiving end; they remained essentially disenfranchised in education matters. They urged that the only solution would be decentralization of control.

Energies of Native leaders had been concentrated heavily upon the issue of resolving their claims to land and other rights in the years prior to 1972. Congress had been considering enactment of legislation that would extinguish those claims. It had been prodded not just by Natives seeking justice and a settlement of claims that had been preserved since the purchase of Alaska from Russia, but by oil companies needing to clear land titles in order to get permits to build an 800-mile pipeline which would bisect the state.[309]

On December 18, 1971, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was signed into law.[310] The complicated act left much to be done by Natives—formation of 12 regional corporations and more than 165 village corporations, selection of 80 million acres to be held by the corporations, and more. But its passage freed some Native leaders so that they could concentrate on matters at home with new vigor. Their

303. Ch. 98, [1966] Sess. Laws of Alaska; Alaska Stat. § 14.14.170 (revised and reenacted in 1975).

304. *Id.* at § 1; Alaska Stat. § 14.14.200 (revised and reenacted in 1975).

305. Alaska State-Operated School System, FY 1975 Budget Submission, Analytic Statement, 00808 (Nov. 15, 1973).

306. In 1965 the department had been reorganized to establish a separate Division of State-Operated Schools. *Report of the Alaska Commissioner of Education, 1965*, 23. Any change in delivery of rural education was imperceptible.

307. Ch. 46, [1970] Sess. Laws of Alaska.

308. *Id., as amended*, § 1, Ch. 199, [1972] Sess. Laws of Alaska. Formerly there were seven members, four from rural areas.

309. See generally, M. Berry, The Alaska Pipeline (1975).

310. 43 U.S.C. § 1601 *et seq.* (1976 Supp.).

successful experience with Congress added to their confidence and credibility.

The ASOSS board and staff were impressed not only by the increased pressure for local control, but also by the demonstrated need for it. Their suggestions and discussions with the State Department of Education led to a proposal in early 1973 by Commissioner of Education Marshall L. Lind that there be a thorough investigation of alternatives for education in the unorganized borough and development of recommendations.

Lind requested the Center for Northern Educational Research (CNER) at the University of Alaska to coordinate the project.[311] CNER had been established in 1971 to foster improvement of education in Alaska through research, program development, and educational policy analysis.[312] Together with the Alaska Federation of Natives Human Resources Committee and the Alaska Legislative Committee on PreHigher Education, CNER undertook a year-long study. CNER was assisted in the undertaking by its advisory council—a committee of eminent educators, legislators, public officials, and organization leaders, most of whom were Natives. A series of meetings was held to address issues surrounding the matter, including meetings of the CNER advisory council, of the AFN Human Resources Committee, of the council and the Legislative Interim Committee jointly, and a rural input meeting where "grass roots" sentiment was expressed by bush residents. The CNER staff of professionals met with education agencies, regional corporations, and other groups to discuss the problem and the process of attacking it. The staff also compiled materials, presented alternatives for optimizing local control, and generally coordinated efforts.[313]

In December, 1973, a Forum on Education in the Unorganized Borough was held by the CNER consortium. Position papers were presented by persons from throughout the state. After that meeting a report was prepared by CNER staff for the Legislative Interim Committee on PreHigher Education.[314]

During the course of the CNER study two bills were introduced in both houses of the state legislature[315] to decentralize the state-operated schools by establishing educational service areas in the unorganized borough. Neither bill passed, but the plans proffered in them were fodder for discussion. Eight other types of alternatives (e.g., regionalization, status quo, and municipalities) were debated in the CNER inquiry. Each was exhaustively explored, and many participants in the process formed their opinions.

The CNER report found consensus that delivery of educational services in the unorganized borough had not satisfied the consumers' needs, that ASOSS had been a mistake, and that continuation of central policy and decision making was unacceptable because it was inefficient and squelched local leadership. The report concluded that community control best could be attained through formation of local governments. It found that both ASOSS and BIA are peculiar bureaucracies which inhibit improvements in education and stifle democracy among the segment of Alaskan population which they are supposed to serve and that both should be phased out.

The CNER report made numerous detailed recommendations which would convert ASOSS into a transitional agency until areas of the unorganized borough could form into districts. State government would foster the conversion process through an active program of school district development, including public education, assistance, and grants. All schools would be under districts and removed from ASOSS or BIA by 1980. Some communities would be required to incorporate as municipalities. State financing of schools would be studied to appraise its abilities to deal with the recommended changes. Provision would be made for waiver of existing school laws and regulations to allow innovation.[316]

The legislature failed to act on the CNER recommendations during the 1974 session. The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) took steps to insure that the recommendations would be acted upon in the next session. When the legislature convened in 1975, several bills were introduced reflecting the CNER and AFN positions.[317] Similar bills were passed in both houses (S.B. 35 and H.B. 24) after considerable lobbying and input from Native groups. The conference version of the bills was signed into law on June 9, 1975.[318]

The act which now is law (S.B. 35) deviates considerably from several of the CNER recommendations, although it heeds others. Basically, S.B. 35 made ASOSS transitional, charting it for dissolution by July 1, 1976. ASOSS was replaced with several regional education attendance areas (REAA), each with elected school boards controlling all but ultimate fiscal decisions.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the legislation is the rapidity with which it had to be implemented. The shape of Alaskan education always has

311. Letter from Dr. Marshall Lind to Dr. Frank Darnell, dated January 8, 1973, included in Center for Northern Educational Research, Delivery of Educational Services to the Unorganized Borough 392-93 (Univ. of Alaska, Aug., 1973).

312. *Resolution Concerning the Establishment of A Center For Northern Education*, University of Alaska Board of Regents, Fairbanks, Feb. 18, 1971.

313. F. Darnell, K. Hecht & J. Orvik, Prehigher Education in the Unorganized Borough: Analysis and Recommendations 9-14 (1974) (hereinafter cited as Darnell, Hecht & Orvik).

314. *Id.*

315. H.B. 192 & S.B. 122, Alaska Eighth Legislature, 1st Sess. (1973).

316. Darnell, Hecht & Orvik, *supra* at 33-53.

317. S.B. 35, S.B. 94, S.B. 136, H.B. 24, Alaska Ninth Legislature, 1st Sess. (1975).

318. Ch. 124, [1975] Sess. Laws of Alaska; Alaska Stat. § 14.08.011 *et seq.* (1975).

depended on the legislative will of the federal and state governments. But never has such radical change been required so quickly. The irony is that because change must occur so suddenly, many things which ought to change will remain the same. The new REAA boards scurried to be functioning by the July 1, 1976 deadline. Some had to retain mediocre ASOSS administrators because time did not permit their replacement. Under these circumstances, little substantive improvement in local school management is predictable.

E. Decentralizing Under S.B. 35

The first major task under S.B. 35 was to determine the boundaries of the REAAs. Hearings were held throughout the state to solicit views from the affected citizens as to the extent of the REAA in which they would be located. The legislation provided that REAA boundaries would follow regional boundaries set under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.[319] The statute appears to authorize division of the unorganized borough into as many REAAs as there are regional corporations, along coterminous lines. But use of regional lines was not intended to be exclusive. This is shown by subsection (b) of the same section, prescribing certain characteristics for REAAs. REAAs must contain an integrated and homogenous socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural area. Consideration also is given to transportation and communication. Geographic features and existing boundaries are to be used in describing boundaries.[320] Of course, first-class cities and organized boroughs are excluded, as they constitute existing school districts.[321] Taken together, the two subsections suggest that REAA boundaries are to follow, rather than cross, regional corporation boundaries where they contact them and conform to natural or other predetermined boundaries. This is how the State Department of Community and Regional Affairs, which was charged with administering the act in consultation with the State Department of Education, interpreted it in a series of informational meetings in rural areas around the state in July and August, 1975. Later they began implementing it similarly when hearings were held in numerous bush locations regarding proposed boundaries. The result of the hearings was a division of the state into some 21 REAAs.[322]

Within each REAA the voters elect a board of from five to 11 members.[323] To determine the exact number for each REAA, the department of education consulted with communities during the hearings described above. To permit representation of small communities whose voices might be unheard in a large REAA, an area can be divided into school board sections, each with one or more seats on the board.[324] Section lines are drawn based on population distribution, but by adjusting the number of seats on the board, representation for very small communities can be had in most cases, assuring that they will have a resident on the board. Board members are elected at large by all voters of an REAA.[325] It was necessary to have REAA boundaries, numbers of representatives, and sections determined quickly, as elections were scheduled for February, 1976.

In addition to the elected board for each REAA, every community (or military reservation) with a school has a community school committee.[326] Members are elected at regular municipal elections or special elections set by the department of education. As with the old advisory school boards which functioned under the state-operated school system and which are replaced by these committees, duties are loosely defined and powers nonexistent. The statute merely charges them to "review and make recommendations to the board" of the REAA "concerning the curriculum, program, and general operation of the local school."[327] They may, however, be delegated other functions by the school board.

Powers of the regional school boards are not plenary, as are the powers of a district school board. Because of their financial relationship with the department of education and the fact that their only powers are those delegated by the legislature, there are limits on many things which they are able to do. For instance, the REAA boards' operation of schools and decisions to establish new schools or close old ones are all subject to approval by the commissioner of education.[328] Authority with respect to construction is limited in that an REAA may have to rely upon the State Department of Public Works to build schools requested by the REAA using funds appropriated by legislature or to accept and use grants from that department.[329] Whether the REAA or the department uses the money, choice of sites and other important matters rest in the discretion of departmental officials operating under state regulations.

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319. Alaska Stat. § 14.08.031(a) (1975). The statute also uses the word "sub-boundaries" in reference to the regional corporations. It is not clear what this refers to.

320. Alaska Stat. § 14.08.031(b) (1975).

321. Alaska Stat. § 14.12.010 (1975).

322. Originally 20 REAAs were created by the Commissioner of Community and Regional Affairs on November 1, 1975, pursuant to authority in Alaska Stat. § 14.08.031(a). But after a meeting of residents of REAA 17 and the governor, REAA 21 (including Whittier and Tatitlek) was created on November 24, 1975, dividing REAA 17 along the boundary between the Chugach and Ahtna Regional Corporations. Memorandum to REAA file from Michael C. Harper, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Community and Regional Affairs, dated December 3, 1975.

323. Alaska Stat. § 14.08.041 (1975).

324. *Id.* at § 14.08.051.

325. *Id.* at § 14.08.041(d).

326. *Id.* at § 14.14.170.

327. *Id.* at § 14.14.200.

328. *Id. at* § 14.08.101(6).

329. Alaska Stat. § 14.08.101(7), 14.08.161 (1976).

Ownership of all school buildings and land remains in the state; REAAs will have use permits for them.[330]

Because of overriding authority of the commissioner with respect to REAA school operations, it is not clear how significant the enumerated powers of boards are, as the new act is only beginning to be implemented. The extent to which the power to "adopt regulations governing organization, policies and procedures for the operation of the schools"[331] can be exercised free of the commissioner's disapproval authority remains to be determined. Similarly, the board's duty to "develop a philosophy of education, principles and goals for its schools"[332] must be read in light of the commissioner's overriding control of school operations.

Matters of employment, salaries, purchasing, and disbursement of funds are lodged with the REAA boards.[333] All funds for REAAs are furnished by the state legislature. They receive "basic need," as used in computing foundation aid to districts, plus an amount equal to the average per pupil local tax contributions in city and borough districts.[334] Thus, they are relieved of local effort requirements, but the amount they can receive from the state over and above basic need is indirectly determined by city and borough decisions regarding their local tax effort.

It is unclear whether the REAAs can receive and expend voluntary contributions. It is conceivable that a local industry, a village or regional corporation, or an individual would donate funds. The donation could be motivated by sheer beneficence or it could be an inducement to the community not to form a local government which could tax the donor's property. There is no express bar to receiving and using supplemental funds, but the powers of the REAA are delegated to it by the legislature and, therefore, must be construed narrowly. If they extend only to the enumerated powers, use of funds other than those appropriated by the legislature or received under a contract with BIA, the department or some public agency would be unauthorized.[335]

Contracting authority in the statute does enable REAA's to receive Johnson O'Malley funds directly.[336] They also are eligible for assistance under the Indian Education Act. Indeed, they are eligible until 1979 for funding under special provisions for schools which have been local education agencies for less than three years.[337] Funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act programs are available also but are administered through the state agency, i.e., the department of education.[338] The REAAs do not receive P.L. 874 impact aid funds directly as districts do.[339] As discussed earlier, a Native-controlled REAA board is eligible to contract with BIA to take over its school operations under provisions of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.[340]

The unmistakable import of S.B. 35 is to vest boards in communities with local management of schools. Management is not synonymous with control, however. Many local objectives can be achieved by selecting the personnel to staff and administer schools. Innovation in operation and curriculum, choice of school locations, and design and condition of facilities are all quite important, too, but are not functions vested solidly in the REAAs. It may be that the commissioner and the department will administer the act to maximize the local control which is possible under it. There is no indication that they will do otherwise, but the specter of state intervention remains. And there is always the possibility that a policy of minimizing involvement in and preemption of local decisions will change, especially as personnel in the department changes.

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330. Alaska Stat. § 14.08.151 (1975).
331. *Id.* at § 14.01.101(5).
332. *Id.* at § 14.08.111(2).
333. *Id.* at § 14.08.101(3) & (4); § 14.08.111(3), (4) & (5).
334. *Id.* at § 14.08.121.
335. *Id.* at § 14.08.101(2).
336. See *supra*, Part II C.
337. See *supra*, Part II F.
338. See *supra*, Part II D.
339. See *supra*, Part II A.
340. See *supra*, Part II G, especially text accompanying notes 230-31.

One other condition leading to enactment of SB 35, not included in Getches' paper, needs to be mentioned before concluding this review. The legislature of 1974 was composed of a large number of members with attitudes and perceptions substantially more liberal than the norm. More social issues were debated than is typical and several socially liberal laws were enacted by this legislature.

By 1975 patience with the State-Operated School system had been exhausted by nearly everyone concerned, and a strong Native position calling for local control of education had been expressed. The social climate of the time was consistent with the nature of the need for local control in rural Alaska and the legislature was sympathetic to socially liberalizing ideas. Enactment of a law providing for a form of local control was assured.

Historical Perspective

The term "historical perspective" suggests that the current situation be viewed in light of past events and their consequences. But too little time has passed since REAAs were established to come to conclusions with unqualified conviction. And trends are emerging only in a rudimentary form. Nonetheless, a review of the history may lead to insights that will enable better contemporary decisions and are worth touching on even at this early date.

A review of rural education history reveals there exists in Alaska a complex social structure that fosters multiple pressures. Regional Educational Attendance Areas were created after conflict, implemented, and are now generating new conflicts along lines of classic educational-political evolution. Creation of REAAs is one event among many. Nothing in this history suggests their creation will be the last.

Educational organizations and political arrangements, it can be seen from the history, have varied in durability. Because REAAs are extraordinary arrangements, i.e., not true local school districts, they must be looked upon as transitory, as have been other extraordinary means in the past. It is reasonable to expect there will be movements for REAAs to acquire the same characteristics as city and borough districts and eventually become elements of local government.

Decision makers were, and continue to be, impinged on through many forms of pressure groups; many with legitimate and honest concerns for the improvement of education for all Alaskans and some with less altruistic motives. It should be noted that there is no separating political processes from education, nor should there be. Honest political differences, openly debated, are positive factors in nurturing new educational ideas. Twenty-one administrative units scattered statewide in the Unorganized Borough create potential for many new ideas to surface and be implemented. Managing education has become the first tangible experience in governmental matters accessible to a

large number of rural residents. REAAs can create appetites in rural residents for even more political involvement and more elegant systems.

In addition to their positive influences on the development of political systems in the unorganized borough, REAAs also have created opportunities for political abuses. The process of making decisions based on political and administrative expediency observed in the past still exists. This process jeopardizes local decision making and nullifies the potentially positive influence of local residents on educational programs. The good intentions and intuitive concerns of rural residents, and the substantial work of middle management staff people and rural faculty members may be eroded when inconsistencies in administrative decisions and policy development are motivated by political and administrative expediency. Indeed, the most potentially destructive condition which may be developing in the current rural situation is the comparatively greater number of educational decisions at the state level being influenced by political or administrative expediency than heretofore.

It must be hoped that racism exhibited in the past, such as was obvious and overt in the beginning of Alaska's rural system, has been extinguished. Views such as those expressed by Commissioner Henderson were the prevailing attitudes of his day. Certainly society will not allow such views to be expressed in our time. The extent to which racism itself still exists, but in more subtle and covert forms, is difficult to say and is beyond the scope of this paper to explore. Historically, it can be seen that racism played a part in forming the rural system. Human nature being what it is, and the long history of racism experienced by mankind in general, compels that we not become complacent just because segregation is now illegal. Native leaders warn of "backlash" because of their current successes. Historical perspective affirms racism has been a continuing, even if declining, problem. There must be continued concern that racism be eliminated lest trends towards its decline be retarded.

The creation of REAAs, in addition to being an historical event, is also an innovation. The advent of REAAs bears out the often cited condition that most innovations had a greater likelihood of becoming institutionalized the closer they are to the central values of the social system of which they are a part. REAAs have come far closer to meeting this condition than anything from the past. This condition bodes well for their future.

Innovations are generally seen as having a greater chance to succeed the more members of the organization affected by the innovation understand what is being changed. In this regard REAAs are experiencing difficulty. Neither sustained nor adequate efforts to educate rural residents in implications of the passage of SB 35 have been undertaken.

Another characteristic of innovations is that they are generally brought about by marginal groups or individuals. Such was the case with REAAs.

Earlier attempts to replace the ASOSS by the Department of Education failed because legislation they prepared lacked ideas and acceptance from groups outside the educational establishment. Many groups involved in the movement toward creation of REAAs, such as the Alaska Federation of Natives, Center for Northern Educational Research, Alaska Native Foundation, Alaska Legal Services Corporation, and RurAL CAP, are examples of marginal organizations. By marginal it is meant they are close to, but not part of, the establishment. They have concern for education and a knowledge of the problems. They do not have the vested and protective interest of the establishment. Marginal groups, by coming from several directions simultaneously, bring otherwise unobtainable ideas and perspectives to bear on a problem. The experiences of seeing REAAs created suggests the involvement of marginal groups in future problem solving may be essential.

REAAs as an organizational innovation are only the means to the more important goal of instructional innovation. It should be remembered that the purpose of the organizational innovation was to bring about shifts of authority and redistribution of power so that instructional changes would ensue. The opportunity for improved instruction may never have been better, but REAAs provide no guarantees. At present it cannot be determined if the organizational innovation has become institutionalized. If it is too early to determine whether an organizational innovation has been achieved; it is certainly too early to determine if innovations in instruction will follow.

Summary

The history of rural education in Alaska contains much that illustrates the frustrations of both consumers and practitioners in search of acceptable types and levels of education. The advent of REAAs as the most recent event in this history and as an organizational innovation is one of the most positive developments in Alaska rural education to date. Trends only now taking form reveal genuine shifts in authority, redistribution of power, and division of labor. Because the nature of REAAs, be it political, educational or organizational, is not entirely clear, and the history of rural education reveals an evolutionary process, they will probably not become permanent arrangements and should be regarded as transitory. The final form for a local education system in rural education does not yet exist, albeit REAAs come much closer to this condition than the most recent previous systems.

Whether constitutionally proper or improper, transitory or permanent, REAAs have advanced the trend toward local decision making and self-determination by rural residents more than any single event in the history of Alaskan education. The extent to which these trends will persist remains unknown. Finally, whether REAAs are structured well enough and whether they are implemented well enough so that the much-sought-after improvements in education will eventually grow out of them has become today's most important question.

Notes

1. Ch. 64, [1917] Sess. Laws of Alaska.

2. Ernest Gruening, The State of Alaska (New York: Random House, 1954), p. 215.

3. State Department of Education, Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1920 (Juneau: Department of Education, 1920), pp. 39,55.

4. James C. Ryan, "A Plan for the Unification of the Alaska Native Service Schools with the Territorial School System" (Juneau: State Department of Education, 1943).

5. State Department of Education, Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1934 (Juneau: Department of Education, 1934), pp. 15-18, 56-57.

6. State Department of Education, Report of the Alaska Commissioner of Education, 1954 (Juneau: Department of Education, 1954), p.26.

7. David H. Getches, Law and Alaska Native Education (Fairbanks: Center for Northern Educational Research, 1977), pp. 32-34.

8. Charles K. Ray, et al., A Program of Education for Alaska Natives (Fairbanks: University of Alaska, 1959).

9. Charles K. Ray, et al., Alaska Native Secondary School Drop-outs (Fairbanks: University of Alaska, 1962).

10. Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, 4 October 1968.

11. Transcript of Proceedings, Conference on Alaska Secondary Education (Sitka: Alaska Congressional Delegation, December 1968), Mimeo.

12. David H. Getches, Law and Alaska Native Education (Fairbanks: University of Alaska, Center for Northern Educational Research, 1977), pp. 27-30.

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS: DECENTRALIZATION OF THE ALASKA STATE-OPERATED SCHOOL SYSTEM 1974 - 1976

Ronald K. Inouye

This chronology is a synthesis of reports prepared by: the Department of Community and Regional Affairs; Anne E. Just, Alaska Federation of Natives; Eric Eckholm, CNER Research Affiliate; and information provided by the Legislative Affairs Office in Fairbanks.

January 1974. Center for Northern Educational Research (CNER) releases its report, Prehigher Education in the Unorganized Borough: Analysis and Recommendations, produced at the request of the Eighth Alaska State Legislature's Interim Committee and of Native leaders.

January - May 1974. Eighth Alaska State Legislature meets and reviews CNER report in committee, but does not act on the recommendations of the report concerning rural education.

July 14-16, 1974. The Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN), having assessed the Legislature's inactivity, calls an Education Strategies Conference in Fairbanks to review CNER's recommendations, to prioritize issues addressed in the report, and to determine whether and how to bring CNER recommendations to the attention and action of the new State Legislature.

August 15, 1974. Gordon Jackson, Executive Vice-President for Human Resources at the AFN, presents the recommendations and strategies from the July conference to the State Board of Education and receives their unanimous support of those items.

October 14-16, 1974. The AFN Annual Convention endorses through resolutions the prehigher education recommendations and strategies. The Human Resource Committee of AFN, meeting during the convention, endorses those principles and directs staff to include those concerns into the formal AFN Education Position Paper to be presented to the newly elected State Legislature.

October 15-16, 1974. AFN convenes an Education Proposal Drafting Session, attended by education and local government agency representatives, to refine further both the CNER recommendations and the July conference strategies and to develop plans for presenting those items to the Legislature.

December 13-14, 1974. AFN, the Rural Alaska Community Action Program (RurAL CAP), and the State Office of Economic Opportunity Department of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA) organize a Legislative Briefing Conference in Wasilla at which time the AFN Education Position Paper is used as the working document for the education workshop.

January 1975. The Ninth Alaska State Legislature convenes, with several bills related to the CNER/AFN recommendations prefiled. These bills include Senate Bill (SB) 35, House Bill (HB) 24, SB 94 and SB 136.

January 20, 1975. Introduction of SB 35 by Senator Genie Chance (D-Anchorage) and HB 24 by Representative Leslie ("Red") Swanson (D-Nenana).

January 29, 1975. Introduction of SB 95 by Senator George Hohman (D-Bethel) committee.

February - March 1975. Senate Health, Education and Social Services (HESS) Committee conducts hearings on SB 35 in Bethel, Nome, Kotzebue, Fairbanks, and Anchorage.

February 21, 1975. HB 188 dealing with military reservation schools is introduced by House HESS. This bill separates the military on-base schools from State-Operated School System (ASOSS) as was recommended in both the CNER report and the AFN Education Position Paper.

March 4, 1975. Committee Substitute for House Bill (CSHB) 188 is endorsed by the State Board of Education.

March 5, 1975. Sponsor substitute for HB 24 is introduced by Swanson.

March 11, 1975. Senate Substitute for House Bill (SSHB) 188 passes Senate (amended).

March 14, 1975. Governor Jay Hammond replaces seven of the nine members on the Board of Directors of the Alaska State-Operated School System.

March 15, 1975. Governor Hammond signs into law HB 188 which authorizes the Commissioner of Education to require schools on military reservations to come under the control of nearby city or borough school districts.

March 19, 1975. Resignation of ASOSS Superintendent Stanley Friese, effective April 1.

March 24-25, 1975. AFN, RurAL CAP, and the State Office of Economic Opportunity in the DCRA sponsor a Legislative Priorities Conference during which rural and Native participants rank various pending bills in terms of their significance to and impact upon their communities. In education, the group ranks SB 35 and HB 24 among high-priority bills recommended for passage by the Legislature.

March 25, 1975. Senate HESS introduces Committee Substitute for Senate Bill (CSSB) 35 which moves to Senate Finance.

April 7, 1975. SSHB 24 moves to House Finance. RurAL CAP hires legislative advocate Richard Listowski to represent rural Alaskan interests and to track legislation which the Legislative Priorities Conference ranked as high priority.

April 23, 1975. Newly appointed Board of Directors for ASOSS issues a position paper supporting local control of schools in the Unorganized Borough while expressing reservations about pending legislation.

May 5, 1975. CSSB 35 passes Senate with amendments.

May 21, 1975. House passes HB 24, counterpart to SB 35, to dissolve ASOSS on June 30, 1975, to create Alaska Unorganized Borough School District (AUBSD) for 1975-76, and to provide for establishing Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAAs).

May 30, 1975. Free Conference Committee (FCC) substitute for HCS CSSB 35 with report passes Senate.

May 31, 1975. FCC HCS CSSB 35 ratified by House.

June 4, 1975. Governor Hammond signs into law (Chapter 124, Session Laws of Alaska 75) the Free Conference version of SB 35 and HB 24. An interim administrative structure, AUBSD, is created for the transitional year until the 21 REAAs become operational on July 1, 1976, each with its own elected school board.

June 25, 1975. ASOSS board hires acting Superintendent George White as Superintendent for AUBSD.

June 30, 1975. DCRA Commissioner Lee McAnerney sends letters to municipal officials, other community people, legislators, non-profit organizations, AUBSD, and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) regarding SB 35 and public hearings.

July 1, 1975. Effective date, creation of AUBSD.

July - September 1975. Representatives of Department of Education (DOE) and DCRA begin visiting rural areas to explain SB 35; public information meetings are held in 124 communities in unorganized borough; 2,369 people attend.

September - October 1975. Representatives of DOE and DCRA hold formal hearings for REAAs; public hearings are held in 21 communities in unorganized borough; 796 people attend, representing 83 communities.

October 15, 1975. Public record closes for comments regarding regional boundaries.

November 1, 1975. Recommendations for regional boundaries are submitted to Governor Hammond.

January - February 1976. Elections are held for regional school boards.

July 1, 1976. Twenty-one Regional Educational Attendance Area school boards take responsibility for education in their regions.

PERSPECTIVES ON PROGRESS

Kathryn A. Hecht

In January, 1974, CNER issued a policy analysis study to the Alaska Legislature on delivery of prehigher educational services in the Unorganized Borough.[1] At that time, the education of children in the Unorganized Borough and on military bases was controlled by a centralized administration in Anchorage (ASOSS), functioning independently of the State Department of Education and with policy decisions made by a board appointed by the Governor. As planning began for the follow-up study to the 1974 report, I was struck by one overwhelming thought--how much has changed in only four years!

That this perspective not be lost in the myriad of detailed issues discussed in the body of this report, letters were sent to a small group of people who have been involved in key roles in the changing rural education scene. The letter requested the recipients to send "their personal viewpoints on the emergence of the new school districts, the process by which they were created, how they are functioning, and an outlook for the future." The statements in italics are taken from the responses.*

The Process Which Led to the Establishment of the REAAs

> *SB 35 was a perfect example of how things should work. It melded the University of Alaska, citizens, and legislators into a group which worked with amazing rapidity. First, the attendance at the meetings of the CNER advisory board was good, the matters considered were germane and to the point, and the timing of the legislation was perfect. The results were some hard decisions, and particularly decisions about the implementation of the bill. There was actual legislation written, a first, and some preparation in the hearing process of the legislature. There was a good lobbying effort by very diverse interests, and the integrity of the bill was protected throughout its short life, between concept and actual passage of a bill. I was and am impressed by the process which created SB 35; it ought to work again, if we could pick a project which is both necessary and political.*

Overall Success of the 21 New Districts

> *The transition from the Alaska Unorganized Borough School*

*Twenty-five letters were sent out in April, 1977. A follow-up letter was also sent. The quotes included here were based upon seven responses received by November 1, 1977.

District system of education in the unorganized borough to the Regional Educational Attendance Areas has occurred with little difficulty. Regional control of pre-higher education in the unorganized borough is now a reality.

The passage of SB 35 was a good piece of legislation, long overdue, which provides a political structure for the school boards to operate, and for some of the very remote areas, a political structure to cover issues in local government.

The past year finds the 21 school districts functioning, for the most part, very successfully. The immense task of starting 21 new districts with untrained boards, administrators and staff has gone as smoothly as can possibly be expected for its initial stages.

The issue was often reduced to a single argument, 'are <u>they</u> prepared for assuming local control?' ...The assumption of local control was something that was easy for the new school boards, and they grasped it with authority and with an ability that was amazing.... It is my opinion that they are functioning well, I am not always in agreement with all 21 priorities, but that also is an indication of their ability to think and function well.

There was a staggering amount of work required to accomplish the transition from state control to regional control over educational services. With minor exceptions, the REAAs seem to be highly successful in providing needed educational services to children residing outside municipal school districts.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I am extremely enthusiastic about the first year of implementation of SB 35, and it is my belief that it has been a success... for all practical purposes there is a single financing system for the state schools for the first time in history. The state is also moving closer to a single school system as more and more BIA schools come under the control of the new districts.

<u>Issues Identified</u>

In the area of staffing, some problems have come to

light due to the lack of trained administrators in Alaska, as well as sufficient secondary teachers for the small schools who can cover a broad curriculum area.

There is some confusion over whether existing constitutional and statutory provisions were carefully adhered to in the drafting of SB 35. One final confusing aspect is the exact type of school districts created. Certainly, the REAAs are not municipal school districts, but then, are they service areas of the unorganized boroughs, or some other entity?

One of the areas that is still causing the districts a tremendous amount of problems is the financing of maintenance and utilities. As everyone knows, the State-Operated School System went through a long period of little or no maintenance, so that many of the buildings are in need of extensive repairs. Many of the schools also had to assume the AVEC charges in electricity, and this particular area was not figured in the foundation formula that has been applied to the districts for the first operating year.

The passage of SB 35 also hoped to bring about an updated agreement between the Bureau and the State of Alaska concerning 'An Overall Education Plan for Rural Alaska', formalized in 1963 and updated in the State Department of Education, but no firm agreement has been reached.

Negotiations have caused a great deal of concern, as for the first time these new districts are negotiating separately with their teachers and employees. It has been a learning experience in which the local boards have tried to establish their authority, which has created some problems that should solve themselves with time and understanding on the part of both labor and management.

The exceptional problems (which have been well publicized) include lack of funds for Alaska Village Electrical Cooperative contracts in rural communities and a lack of state budgetary review. This lack of budgetry review may be due to no explicit statutory authority to the Department of Education.

The Community School Committees that were created by

SB 35 are also an area of concern, as the duties of the CSC's have not been clearly outlined in each school. Each board is wrestling with the problem of how to make effective use of the CSC's and not delegate the authority that is statutorily theirs.

The Future of the REAAs

As the new districts begin their second year of operation, I'm impressed by the commitment and concern they display.

I think that the future for the 21 new school districts is good, providing we can keep the federal government and the state government out of their hair. The complete funding of educational needs in Alaska is not too far in the future. The danger lies in the fact that State government often dances to the drum of the federal government.... That type of problem is where the future of the 21 new school districts will become clouded. Not by their own actions, but by a combination of state and federal regulations, which will tend to restrict their thinking into channels not of their own making.

It is my conclusion that school systems ought to serve the society which surrounds them. This transcends simple considerations of either language or geography, and Alaska should capitalize on both the diversity of its population, and the fact that it represents such a wide variety of cultures in the delivery of its educational programs. Difference is not a problem until someone makes it so. Language is only a problem when it is not recognized. Culture without change will die, so, the matters relating to the future of how the 21 new schoolboards will fare relate largely to the matters of outside funding and outside influences.

I realize that the movement for local control focused on that control as a means to improve the quality of education. But among the ends which I believe any study of the new districts should consider is not only the improved quality of education but also the death or diminishment of paternalism and racism. Personally, I see that change contributing substantially to a better way of life for kids.

Notes

1. Frank Darnell, Kathryn Hecht, and James Orvik, Prehigher Education in the Unorganized Borough: Analysis and Recommendations (Fairbanks: University of Alaska, Center for Northern Educational Research, 1974).

PART II -- REAA DATA AND ANALYSES

SURVEY OF REAA SUPERINTENDENTS AND BOARD MEMBERS

Kathryn A. Hecht

CNER distributed questionnaires in June, 1977, to each REAA, with a letter of explanation to superintendents and board chairpersons. (See Appendix A for questions and accompanying letter.)

Questions were asked of superintendents, board chairpersons, individual board members and the board as a whole. Responses were received from approximately half the REAAs (10)[1]; nine superintendents, three board chairpersons, and sixteen board members responded.

Looking first to responses from superintendents one might have predicted that they would have responded similarly due to common educational backgrounds and administrative experiences and the frequency with which they communicate with each other. This did not prove to be the case. Superintendents' responses to almost every question showed vast differences in how they perceived their REAA's operation and progress during the first year. It seems reasonable to assume the variety of responses among superintendents reflect actual differences in experiences among the REAAs. They differed most on questions considered basic to SB 35 and REAA development, such as local control and community school committees.

Board chairpersons were asked some of the same questions as superintendents. They seemed to differ most from the superintendents in noting an increased interest in local government related to their experience with the REAA system. Questions asked only of board members included asking them to reflect on their experience of serving on the REAA board and what suggestions they might have for new members.

In this chapter, selected responses to five questions are presented as answered by REAA superintendents and board members. The last set of questions, on being a board member, was asked only of board members.

QUESTION I

Given your experience as a REAA superintendent/board member, please think back on Senate Bill 35 and the new REAA system and list what you feel are (1) its most positive features; and (2) things which need to be changed.

> Aspects of local control heavily dominated responses from both superintendents and board members about positive features. Among needed changes described by superintendents, suggestions about CSCs were prominent. Both groups mentioned need for changes in election procedures.

(1) Most Positive Features of SB 35

Superintendents:

The ability for decisions to be made on a regional level.

Local control.

Expedites decision making and problem solving.

Provides programs designed for and by local people.

Allows local control on expenditures.

Allows local control on employment of administration/ teachers.

SB 35 is allowing some rural residents who were previously unfamiliar with 'why' things were as they were to understand and realize the immense difficulty any change causes.... SB 35 gives rural residents increased hope for better schools.

More efficient than control by SOS or AUBSD.

Board Members:

SB 35 did give a certain degree of local control and all of that is to the good of effective education and self-government....

It did give us total freedom in the area of policy. Total fiscal and legal responsibility on the board's shoulders.

Getting control of the system down to a local level, whereby local people really feel they have an input into education.

I think it was a step in the right direction to permit local control. Local people should be able to set their own priorities for educating their own children.

It gave us some local control. It proves that we can run schools cheaper than the State and more effective with emphasis on education for education's sake. It also proves that we can build schools cheaper, faster, warmer for the

dollar than the State did. Local ideas and recommendations were asked by the board.

Better communication with staff. More local input and decisions made. Better teacher-parent relations, due to local school committee involvement. Our right to create our own construction program.

Gives local citizens an opportunity to participate in the education of their children, if they so choose. Helps individuals understand the financial ramifications of school expense.

...teacher hirings, etc., had to go through the bureaucratic way, through Juneau or Anchorage, and gave the people in either city the power to reject or award without any knowledge of our problems and needs, whereas, the REAA system gave people in the local area a voice on our educational system....

(2) Things Which Need to be Changed

Superintendents:

Rules, regulations, laws which prevent full use of capital bond monies; i.e., overhead administrative costs in Fairbanks, Juneau, and Anchorage.

CSC election procedure.

Method of election for board members.

Clarification of duties of CSCs.

While SB 35 is a major experiment in obtaining better schools and involving people, it was quite inadequate in one respect. It did nothing to adequately prepare the people to truly manage their own schools....

More careful delineation of REAAs as 'School Districts.'

Making CSCs optional and advisory.

Eliminate CSCs -- or at least the need for them.

Organization of board responsibilities. The board uses

the legal format for personal opinions, philosophies, and ideologies without any concern for students.

Need better access to specialists; however, they are available if one works at it.

Board Members:

Full control on matters of owning land sites. All areas need to contribute their own share of monies to operate their schools.

People's attitudes on Federal and State grants--we all seem to have our hands out ready to take and are unwilling to give (money or time) for our children's needs.

School foundation funding by the State Department of Education to cover all financial needs per district budgets.

Straighten out the election procedure.

Local control is only 'where permitted by State and Federal regulations.' There are too many controls, earmarked funds and special requirements. Our district spends far too much time requesting, justifying and complying with other people's requirements. If we are really capable of local control, then why not all the way? After all, it's our children and our money.

To complete the attempt toward local control, allow local boards the control of their REAA.

CSC elections should be supervised by the State and cover the cost of these elections.

QUESTION II

How effective do you think SB 35 and the creation of the REAAs have been in bringing local control of schools to rural Alaska?

A wide variety of opinions were expressed by the superintendents, ranging from very effective to little change. The board members' responses also were mixed, tending toward the positive.

Superintendents:

Very effective here.

Excellent.

Local control has very little to do with SB 35. SB 35 created 21 new districts and so resulted in 'district control' rather than 'local control.' SB 35 holds the district board responsible, not local communities.

Very little change. Virtually all the issues which we have time to address are forced upon us by DPW [Department of Public Works], *DOE* [Department of Education], *and USOE* [U.S. Office of Education], *etc. Conversely, it gave the CSCs the impression of control so we take flack from both sides. Regulators telling us we have control when we don't. CSCs wanting to know why we don't do anything different.*

If the funding issues had been addressed three years ago, the effects would have been very favorable. However, difficulties created this year have set this district back 5 to 10 years....

Reasonably so, but too many board members and superintendents have overestimated the amount of authority which the board has and underestimated the responsibilities.

Board Members:

Fairly effective; however, many thought that much greater local control was implied. We all worry at the abundance of controls, both state and federal, but most are essential guidelines.

Effective in some districts and not as effective in other districts.

By designing our own district we are now able to provide students with an education system based on their needs and not the teachers' or bureaucrats'. We also save the taxpayer money.

Very little. It has given more control to the DOE and

State School Board because of the way it was administered.

Only partially effective. SB 35 has done very well--now it is up to the REAA Boards to listen to their needs.

So effective that 'outsiders' don't come in our area or district and tell us how to run our schools, programs, and other education-related aspects because they don't have any business on how we are going to handle REAA affairs.

It has been effective enough to satisfy a board of our limited sophistication and knowledge. As districts become more used to handling their own schools they may either become (1) complacent and let some controls slip back to the State or (2) more demanding and insist that they be given total responsibility in such areas as construction and transportation.

Each REAA will be as successful as the boards are able to make it. I feel that the State recognizes the REAAs as a group and does not recognize the fact that some are prepared to act for themselves.

QUESTION III

Given your experience in local control of schools, has your interest in local government (municipal, borough or city) increased? decreased? stayed about the same? or no opinion? Please explain.

The board members showed a far greater indication of increased interest in municipal government than did the superintendents.

Interest in local government:	Superintendents	Board Members
increased	2	10
decreased	0	0
stayed about the same	6	3
no opinion	1	3

Superintendents:

No explanations were received.

Board Members:

Because there has to be more local control in order for proper and orderly flow of government, i.e., local, state and federal.

I can see that a normal, non-politician can have an effect on things. It is democracy on the most basic level.

My interest now is seeing that the law prohibiting a municipality of the second class from supporting a local school is changed.

Have learned more about the way the democratic process works. Have become more aware of political influence over how schools must function.

Because I have become increasingly aware of legislative action necessary to fund our schools, I have also become more aware of moves within the state toward establishing organized boroughs....

Think it's bound to increase as you feel you are a part of the local government.

I am not a politician other than in the sense of school boarding and am concerned about education for my own children as well as my neighbor's. I see often politics with ulterior motives which I cannot condone. We have no local government and wish for none other than for our schools.

QUESTION IV

Do you see a need for Community School Committees? Why or why not?*

Split responses to this question were received from the superintendents and the board chairpersons.

*Asked of superintendents and board chairpersons only.

Superintendents:

Yes, so villagers can have a vehicle to formally express their views.

Yes--information from these provides the Board with local information.

Yes--adoption of district plans, practices to local needs and as a source of ideas for school program improvement.

Yes--handle local problems.

If community desires.

No, not in our area. Our school committees are adequately represented on the regional board.

No, we have two schools in the district and they are five miles apart. The people would rather participate directly with the district board.

No--communication should be such that they are either useless or valueless. Of course, if they are not listened to now, we still don't need them, but too often they constitute local 'axe-grinding' forums.

Board Chairpersons:

Yes, very much. This community level is where local control really is. The regional board is totally weighed down right now with district business. If there were no CSCs, the running of each school would (probably) be totally dictated by principals and superintendents, which might not accurately reflect what the community wishes are.

No. The Board members try to be well-informed about the schools in the district and get considerable input from local people. CSCs increase the problems involved with training and tend to confuse policy and administration.

Yes. Board members cannot follow programs in all nine communities closely enough.

QUESTION V

On being a REAA Board Member,* (1) What do you enjoy most about being a REAA Board Member? (2) What do you dislike? (3) Do you believe serving on the Board is worth the time spent on it? (4) What advice would you give a new REAA Board Member?

Despite likes and dislikes about being a board member, all board members responding felt it was worth the time spent.

(1) What do you enjoy most about being a Board Member?

The challenge and the opportunity to lay the foundation for something new.

Being able to have a hand in deciding what direction our school district (and my children) will move in. (Hopefully toward improvement.)

Helping improve our educational system from what it was (under the SOS).

As a former teacher, I have enjoyed being 'on the other side of the fence.' Our board has worked very well together and taken positive steps toward educating the children of our district.

Attending the monthly meetings and hearing persons desiring to address the board and their comments on different topics.... Having control of teachers' contracts, negotiations and policies in this district.

The challenge of insuring quality education for the children is most satisfying of all.

Presenting community opinions on school issues for board consideration.

Being with people of different villages.

Feel like I am partly fulfilling my duties as a citizen of this republic and my responsibilities as a Christian.

(2) What do you dislike?

The paperwork.

*Asked only of Board Members

The traveling in the extreme cold.

The hassles between the Department of Education and Department of Public Works and our Board trying to get construction started and completed.

How easy it is to be put on a recall petition and be recalled for no reason.

The frustrations of unnecessary red tape that occupies board time to serve no purpose.

Being unable to give as much time as needed to forming policy. Also, having to take time to settle 'petty' difficulties that really should be settled on a different level.

Being in a position to have total access to information on which decisions are based and not being able to get the public to listen to the reasoning behind unpopular decisions. Very frustrating.

Most significant decisions leave some portion of the populace, the board, the teachers, or the students less than happy and some seem to hold grudges. Unfortunate but necessary.

Of course, no matter how one votes, in some quarters you are always wrong and you usually hear about it. On the other hand, you are very seldom given credit for your efforts and beliefs.

(3) Do you believe serving on the Board is worth the time spent on it?

Yes. (Nine responses)

Oh, yes, and much more time. I believe it's the most important thing that's happened in education in 100 years.

Well, if we do have local control, it is much better to make decisions from people that have knowledge of our area. You bet!

Yes, when positive things can be accomplished.

Yes, because local people are well-informed about what

is going on.

(4) What advice would you give to a new REAA Board Member?

Be prepared to work hard. It is not an easy job. Expect a lot of travel.

Make sure your membership on the board represents all the people in the region. Even if their thoughts are not yours, see that their voices are heard. Stand with your superintendent once a decision is made by the majority of board members even if you disagree.

Be prepared to spend extensive time in studying and considering information in areas you may not be familiar with (i.e., finance, legislation, etc.) and be willing to make decisions at times that seem to go against what the vocal public might want because you have more information to base that decision on.

Attend as many REAA meetings as possible before deciding to run for election. Visit the smaller communities within the region to see how the CSCs operate. Don't get discouraged.

Have patience. Make worthwhile decisions. Answer thoughtfully. Try to attend all board meetings.

Just be sure this is what you want to do; take into consideration all the drawbacks.

Be well aware of the tasks involved, the time required, and come with improving education as your sole goal.

Be prepared to hear the worst about yourself and be prepared to take it.

Notes

1. Those REAAs who returned one or more questionnaires are: Alaska Central Railbelt, Alaska Gateway, Bering Strait, Chugach, Copper River, Delta/Greely, Iditarod, Lower Kuskokwim, Pribilof, and Southwest Region.

ANALYSIS OF THE REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL ATTENDANCE AREA BOARD MINUTES DURING THEIR FIRST YEAR

Ronald K. Inouye

The following chapter is an analysis of the Regional Educational Attendance Area (REAA) board minutes for fiscal year '77 (July 1, 1976 - June 30, 1977). The five parts to this chapter, under the following descriptive subject headings are:

REAA Board Meetings
Common Contracted Services
Major Common Issues
Unique Issues
Creative Solutions to Local Problems

REAA Board Meetings

Number of meetings

In analyzing the minutes from each of the 21 Rural Educational Attendance Areas (REAAs) for the year July 1, 1976 to June 30, 1977, a total of 281 sets of minutes were reviewed. The minutes from all but two of the 21 districts were complete for that first year of operation.

The number of meetings convened by any single board ranged from five to 31. The median number was 12, and the average (mean) was 13. The two districts meeting the most frequently had 27 and 31 meetings respectively.

Locations

Seventy-three per cent of the meetings were held in the community in which the district offices were situated. In five REAAs there were no meetings away from the district office community because no other communities were located in the REAA or travel and expense problems prevented convening in any other locale. Seventy-seven of the 281 meetings (27%) occurred outside the school district office community. In one instance, all of the meetings were held outside of the school district office community; and in one instance, the meetings frequently convened in Anchorage, which had better transportation service and lower costs than would have been incurred by convening the meetings in any location within the district. A common practice was to meet in an urban location (e.g., Anchorage, Fairbanks or Juneau) outside of the home district, combining the board meeting business and required other state agencies' business.

Duration

The amount of time spent by boards in meetings varied widely. In most instances, the beginning and adjournment times were recorded in the minutes. One board analyzed the time it spent in session and felt that six hours per meeting was too much; consequently, that board took steps to reduce the time by limiting discussion of issues. As was noted in the minutes:

> *Mr. ___ reported that he had figured the average length of the last 13 meetings...and found that the meetings were running an average of 5.78 hours. The last five meetings averaged 5.96 hours in length, indicating that the meetings were getting longer... [he] felt that the public is being excluded from participating in the meetings due to the length and late hours of the meetings. He felt that day meetings would encourage more community participation. Mrs. ___ felt that a better solution would be to limit filibustering time. Also, daytime meetings would exclude working people.*

Board Seats

Categorizing the information from the board minutes revealed some general points which may be of interest.

147 board seats were created:

7 districts with five members;
9 districts with seven members;
3 districts with nine members; and
2 districts with eleven members.

Of the 147 seats, 45 (or 31%) were occupied by women. Of the 21 chairpersonships, five (or 24%) were occupied by women.

Board Seat Changes

During the course of the first year of operation, 13 districts experienced some change in board composition:

8 districts had one member change;
4 districts had two member changes; and
1 district had three member changes.

The member changes resulted in 43 women board memberships, lessening the percentage to 29% of the total membership.

Style of Minutes

The style of the minutes varied. Those most conducive to reading were physically arranged so that a quick perusal would identify the major topics discussed, the items requiring board action, and how each member voted. The use of key word descriptors in the margin facilitated the review of the minutes.

Additional useful information which sometimes appeared in the minutes included:

Date, location and duration of meeting;
Presence or absence of each board member;
Listing or count of non-board individuals present; and
An appendix of the materials referenced in the text of the minutes.

Per diem, Stipends, Honoraria

Varied rates and criteria for compensating board members for expenses associated with district board travel and meetings as well as per diem rates, monthly stipends and honoraria were considered by most districts. A sampling of some of the rates and their criteria follow:

> $50 per 24-hour day with $12.50 per six-hour period or fraction thereof with no meal allowance
>
> $300 per month stipend for those months a meeting is attended
>
> $100 per day for board meetings and travel; one-half day increments used
>
> $100 per day for 24 hours; $25 per six-hour segment after the first 24 hours
>
> $50 per day; loss of income not considered a legitimate expense for board compensation; $100 per day if travel is involved
>
> $40 per day plus $20 for meals.

General Comments on REAA Board Meetings

The infrequency of board meetings often reflected the mercurial nature of the weather, and schedules of the individual board members. Some boards met on a specific day each month and conducted the necessary business within a brief amount of time. Others had to meet whenever the weather and transportation would allow, often resulting in members losing personal work time not only for board meetings, but also for awaiting the arrival of other board members so the board meeting could be convened. In several instances, the waiting time was compensated to provide some income for the member who would otherwise be employed at home. Convening meetings proved to be more of a problem during summer months when larger numbers of board members are seasonally employed; often the boards in such regions would not meet at all during the high employment summer months.

Seldom were discussions recorded in which districts considered programs or projects jointly with other districts. The exceptions proved to be discussions on the Regional Resource Centers which required the participating districts to specify the services which could not be acquired independently by each district.

The majority of school board meetings were well attended by the public,

particularly among those boards which were able to move the sites of meetings to communities within the district. Most boards held an open meeting with the local Community School Committees as well as with local school personnel prior to the regular board business. In some instances it was not possible to visit the communities on a systematic basis due to the vast expense of getting all the appropriate individuals to a meeting site or of having those individuals physically accommodated in a small community.

The role of students on boards was minimal. Most districts did not solicit student opinion on programs or personnel evaluation. In one instance, the board did request to know what the students wished to have as electives in the secondary program. Several boards had alternating student representatives present at the meetings. One board included occasional reports on student council activities, and two boards had students participate in the evaluation of teachers.

The amount of travel done by the board members, administrative staff, and students was large. Purposes of the travel ranged from very specific types of training, to fact-finding, to student educational trips. The districts having active athletic competitions provided travel support for those competitions. Most non-athletic travel was funded through monies raised by the students themselves or from special sources such as the Johnson O'Malley or Indian Education Act.

The use of correspondence courses was evident in most all REAAs. Individual families, living in areas not serviced by state-maintained roads adequate for bus transportation, and communities having less than the required number of students for a teacher made use of correspondence courses.

Boards made extensive use of executive sessions, most averaging one executive session per board meeting. Only once did the minutes record that the use of the executive session was challenged.

> *Mr. ___ stated that he and other people in the area are concerned about the number of executive sessions the board goes into. He stated further that he has known of things that have been discussed in executive session that he can see absolutely no use for them having been done in executive session.*

Policy development was an ongoing process for most boards; in one instance, a board member offered to draft suggested policies to which the board as a whole could react at successive meetings. This was offered as an alternative to contracting with a non-district agency or individual for help with the actual writing, using sub-committees or involving the entire board in drafting policies.

The use of external consultants was minimal. Only in areas of providing Title IX surveys were consultants used to any great extent. Some curriculum assistance was provided through contracts to individuals or groups like the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, and assistance was sought for staff evaluation.

Some districts communicated regularly on education legislation with their local legislative representatives. Communication was also important when problems arose with the Department of Public Works or other state agencies, and the district sought their legislator's assistance in resolving the problems.

The majority of boards formed educational policy through reaction rather than systematic study and subsequent policy initiation. With little discussion of the long-term implications, the board took action in policy areas as formalities in the process of continuing or seeking additional funding for their schools. Requests for the board to provide a supporting resolution for a new or continuing program were seldom challenged, even though many of the continuing programs were initiated under a different set of conditions and circumstances.

Very few of the minutes recorded split votes on issues. This could have resulted from adequate discussion prior to and during the meetings, resulting in a consensus on the issues or, perhaps, the divergent points of view were not perceived nor raised during the discussion.

The minutes indirectly indicated that a number of board members had little or no previous experience on policy-making boards. As a result, the superintendent spent large periods of board meeting time explaining the procedural as well as substantive aspects of issues upon which the board needed to act.

The State Department of Education provided the initial training to the school boards. Additional workshops were offered by the Association of Alaska School Boards and through visits by members of the State Department of Education to provide assistance in specific areas. Another kind of help was exemplified in the minutes of the Southeast Island School District which indicated offers of assistance from the board and administration of the Ketchikan Gateway Borough Schools.

Common Contracted Services

The review of board minutes indicated that a number of services were contracted by the REAAs. Some of the more common services with their providers' names and locations are listed alphabetically.

Affirmative Action Assessments:

Human Resource Associates - Anchorage
Thelma Thrasher - Anchorage

Architectural:

Design Group - Anchorage
Ellerbe/Alaska - Anchorage
Kaufman Alaska Incorporated - Anchorage
Lane, Knorr and Plunkett - Anchorage
Maynard - NBBJ - Anchorage
Mower and Associates - Anchorage
NorthWest Design Associates - Anchorage
Simpson, Usher and Jones, Inc. - Anchorage

Auditors:

Coopers and Lybrand - Anchorage
Dyer and Funk - Anchorage
Ernst and Ernst - Anchorage
Main, Lafrentz and Company - Anchorage
Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Company - Anchorage
Arthur Young and Company - Anchorage

Banks:

Alaska National Bank - Branch
Alaska Statebank - Branch
National Bank of Alaska - Branch
United Bank of Alaska - Anchorage

Insurance:

Dawson and Company - Branch
Frank B. Hall - Fairbanks
Pacific Insurance - Anchorage
Porter-Spaulding - Ketchikan
Rollins, Burdick and Hunter - Anchorage

Legal Counsel:

William Bankston - Anchorage
Chris Cook - Bethel
Faulkner, Banfield, Doogan and Holmes - Juneau
Thomas E. Fenton - Fairbanks
Josephson and Trickey - Anchorage
A. Lee Peterson - Anchorage
Rice, Hoppner and Hedlund - Fairbanks
Randell Weddell - Juneau
Ziegler, Ziegler and Cloudy - Ketchikan

Major Common Issues

From the analysis of the minutes there emerged approximately 35 categories of issues discussed commonly by all boards. Those categories were:

Board policies

Central Office administrative procedures

Personnel (hiring, evaluation, financial negotiating, non-retention)
- administrative
- certificated
- classified
- special consultants

Funding

Facilities
- use permits
- insurance
- utilities
- architects
- Department of Public Works
- planning and construction
- maintenance and operation
- staff housing

Programs
- Title programs
- special education
- vocational education
- bilingual/bicultural
- Johnson O'Malley

Programs (continued)
Indian Education Act
boarding home
correspondence

Student travel and transportation

Food service

Regional Resource Centers

Community School Committees

Among the issues of most concern to all the boards were Community School Committees, classified personnel, facilities planning and construction, and staff housing. The method of calculating the frequency of discussion of the issue was to list each topic each time it was discussed by the board through the year. The issue ranked first (most frequently discussed) for each board was listed, and a frequency count made of that list. In several instances, a board had two issues which tied for first, so both were listed. The most frequently discussed issues which were ranked first by each board in all 21 REAAs in descending order are:

Issue most frequently discussed	No. of REAAs
Community School Committees	8
Classified personnel	5
Facilities planning and construction	3
Staff housing	3
AVEC/utilities	2
Budget	2
Transportation	2
Food service	1
Certificated personnel	1

Unique Issues

School building and staff housing problems were frequent among all districts. A sampling of some of the problems follows.

...Potentially losing the elementary school in Noatak due to the erosion of the river.

...In Togiak the growth and expansion of programs created a housing problem for personnel brought

to administer the program.

...In Arctic Village and Eagle the classes were convened in the teachers' quarters.

...Having vocational classes in the community pool hall.

...Paying the transportation expenses of a teacher living in one community and commuting to another because of the unavailability of housing in the teaching community.

...Because of the size and construction of the Tri-Valley School, the Healy Fire Department could not adequately protect the school in case of a fire. The fire department has investigated the situation and although the Tri-Valley School has a good sprinkler system in the new section of the building, there is not adequate water at the school or the fire department to supply it.

...____informed the board that Chuloonawick wants a school but families have moved to other villages so their children can go to school. Since a school cannot be built until a village has at least eight students, families would have to move back and stay there if there was a school. Under the Land Claims, Chuloonawick is recognized as a village.

...The District was obligated by AUBSD and SOS to provide free maintenance and nine kilowatts of electricity per month during the school year for the community laundry and shower facilities.

...Oil line froze--5000 gallons [of fuel] unaccounted for. Water contamination and [resultant] closure of the hot lunch program.

...A complex State usage permit amendment allowing the District to sell excess electricity to village so District does not become a "public utility" and allowing the state to lease space and land to RCA for a satellite antenna.

> *...Mr. ___* [maintenance man] *outlined some of the drawbacks to his position, primarily considerable administration duties, i.e., expediting, paperwork, ordering, follow-up and so forth, which greatly hinder his ability to do field assessment and maintain essential contact with maintenance personnel in the villages.*

The following two items indicate the concern district boards had with "local control" and their relationship to state and federal agencies.

The Lower Kuskokwim minutes relate:

> *Our REAA strongly supports village-based high schools but just as strongly opposes many of the proposed changes in the regulations and the process by which the hearing was publicly advertised. This REAA's opposition is focused on* [the State's] *not recognizing the authority of the REAA and other legal organizations to control the decision-making process regarding the development and administration of local high schools.*

Regarding the Lau issue, Kuspuk District board members stated:

> *...they were opposed to signing the plan, feeling that the federal government is encroaching far too much on local decision making and that the plan presented combines both state and federal law which, in effect, leaves the interpretation and enforcement of state law in the hands of the Office of Civil Rights.*

Community School Committees and their relationship to the district boards became an item of public concern as reflected in these comments from the public during district board meetings:

> *Mrs. ___ presented a grievance against the ___ CSC and the way meetings are conducted.*
>
> *The ___ CSC chided the district board for not soliciting input or acknowledging recommendations.*

Sister ___ expressed that the CSC members were being left out of the decision making.

District boards provided different methods for having CSC representatives present at the board meetings.

The Yukon Flats District created an associate board member position filled by a CSC member, thereby providing CSC representation at district board meetings. In several other districts, transportation was provided on a rotating basis to CSC representatives for attendance at district board meetings.

Public comments at the district board meetings were diverse with issues raised such as:

___ felt that the number of vocational education courses should be kept down as many of the students do not know their basics well enough...also felt that many teachers do not know how to teach reading nor do they know enough of the English language and its construction, and that the board should insist on some competency from the teachers.

___ stated that it had come to her attention that last year there had been a Special Education student on the Honor Roll...Although she agrees with giving a student incentive, she does not agree with giving an 'A' or 'B' to Special Education students, say, in reading. This is taking away from the child who is in the classroom who is competing with other children for the grade. This is grading on effort and not scholastic ability.

___ deplored the lack of communications between teachers and the principal.

___ asked about the validity of the tests used in the schools, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Metropolitan Test. [The Superintendent] *reported that those tests are only used for proposal writing for the region to qualify for Title I dollars; they are not used for academics, but only for getting money for the District.*

Creative Solutions to Local Problems

This section relates a number of ideas and techniques used by at least one district to improve educational planning. The purpose of this section is to describe ideas which might be adapted by other districts as methods of solving common problems.

The methods for providing basic information about each District school for students, parents, and staff might be approached in a manner similar to the Aleutian District's:

> *___ plans to have color slides for the site-by-site review at a future time. Reviewing the slides with the board and each CSC will help make all aware of the circumstances and conditions of the other seven communities...*

or, as in the Lake/Peninsula District's:

> *...making maps of the school district, one for each school. These will be laminated and therefore very durable. Each map would be different, in that each school would be featured on their map.*

A use of video-tape for providing background information and responses on the topics of SB 35, CSCs, and secondary schools was contracted by the Bering Strait District. Unfortunately the contract was terminated before the project was completed.

Information relating to federal and state procedures which might impact local districts was also found in widely circulated publications. One citizen, commenting to the board about school records in the Lower Kuskokwim District,

> *...brought to the attention of the board an article from the 'Better Homes and Gardens' magazine regarding the confidentiality of school records.*

To build some common identity among the schools within the new districts, most school boards initiated contests among students to design a logo or emblem representative of their district which would be placed on the district's letterhead stationery, etc. Most offered cash or magazine subscription prizes; the board made the final selection.

In the Bering Strait District, special jackets with the district emblem affixed were purchased and worn by the board members.

Additionally, the area of providing the public with information regarding school activities and particularly school board actions was a common concern among all districts. The concern arose from comments typified by those of a citizen who stated in a Copper River District board meeting:

> *...much of the public does not know what the board is doing and suggested that the board investigate the possibility of filing a news report with the radio station of what has occurred.*

The minutes of the 21 districts revealed that the problem of providing the public with information was a common one. Each district approached its solution within the context of media modes available to it, ranging from (1) posting meeting agendas and special minute summaries or the entire minutes in prominent places within the district to (2) writing stories for the local newspaper and attempting to have local video and audio coverage by the media. In several instances, the local media took issue with the decisions of the board and provided editorial comment on educational issues.

The Yukon Flats District discussed:

> *...having a liaison person in the district office. This person will be working closely with the superintendent and should have some background on the schools, school district, and CSCs.*

Several ideas related to student policies and instructional programs emerged during the study.

The Lower Yukon passed a policy welcoming over-age students to attend school on a probationary basis as a method of encouraging older potential learners.

The Copper River District discussed:

> *...a one-semester course of basic subject matter in the field of Alaska studies be made a required subject within the district of the class graduating in 1981, but that this requirement be implemented at an earlier date if legally possible.*
>
> *An uninterrupted, sustained, silent reading program is being tried for the first nine weeks. At this time everyone in the school, students and staff, would stop work and read during this time.*

A number of procedures are cited to indicate the methods by which the various districts are improving their staffing. In the Southwest District teacher selections were discussed:

> *Because candidates were interviewed during the school year, the process wasn't as ideal as desired. That ideal system would involve CSCs in the selection process. The system used for late hires involved short-term contracts or probationary status to allow the principal and CSC to evaluate them with recommendations for full-time or permanent status.*

The Yukon Flats District resolved:

> *...that teachers holding Class D Vocational Certificates be declared to be equivalent, for salary schedule purposes, to teachers holding Bachelor's degrees.*

The Lower Kuskokwim District, in the review of the instructional salary scale, reported:

> *...there are only two significant changes in the salary schedule, both of which could encourage teachers to take additional college courses in their field rather than in non-related subjects, when seeking advancement on the salary scale.*

The involvement of students in school governance beyond that of student government was reflected in the request of Mountain Village High School students to have representation on the District school board. In the Lake/Peninsula District plans were made for a student representative to attend each of the school board meetings; the student representative was to be rotated among representatives of the three high schools in the district. In only one district did the student council president present a report to the school board on significant school activities as part of the meeting agenda.

A number of districts grappled with student transportation problems. The Lower Kuskokwim District discussed the possibility of obtaining an air-cushioned vehicle for all-year travel of students and possibly for transporting supplies.

The Iditarod District considered:

> *...a possible air-taxi service for student trans-*

> *portation. One advantage to this service would be to broaden curriculum opportunities as kids could take advantage of facilities* [in other communities]. *Locally based secondary programs could be maintained and strengthened by this approach.*

Improving general school district administration proved to be a challenge to every district with a number of significant techniques adopted.

The Yukon Flats District established a revolving fund for one of their schools for limited purchasing. The procedure saved time and lessened dependency on the central office for procedural approval, etc.

Requests for assistance and contracting for specific services through the regional and local Native corporations and associations occurred. These requests included provision of emergency school maintenance; having board members contracted by the corporation rather than the REAA to avoid disqualification because of their membership on the board; and assistance for villages in writing Johnson O'Malley proposals.

To help facilitate district business, the Aleutian District established a technical center in Anchorage to provide support for administrative functions.

As a method of facilitating building construction and providing continuity to building use, the Lake/Peninsula District:

> *...had become aware we needed a director for the building project who could stay with the project. This person (administratively certificated, with prior experience with a building program and curriculum planning experience) would stay on as the principal after overseeing the planning and construction of the building.*

The formation of the committees for various tasks was uniquely accomplished by several boards. Beyond the typical procedure of having internal board committees, these districts utilized non-board members in interesting mixtures:

Policy Manual Committee	Evaluation Plan Committee
2 students	1 student
2 teachers	1 teacher
2 citizens	2 board members

Student Travel Committee	Building Committee
2 student council representatives	1 student
2 teachers	2 teachers
2 school board appointees	2 school board members
	2 CSC representatives
	4 general public
	1 maintenance man
	1 superintendent
	1 principal
	1 Chamber of Commerce representative

Notes

1. Mr. Eric Eckholm, Research Affiliate with the Center for Northern Educational Research (CNER) during the summer of 1976, requested each REAA to provide CNER with copies of their minutes on a continuing basis. The State Department of Education (DOE) assisted by providing some copies that were missing in the CNER collection.

ANALYSIS OF STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MINUTES: July 1, 1975 - June 30, 1977

Kathryn A. Hecht

State Board of Education minutes were analyzed for FY '76 (July 1975 through June 1976), the year of transition from the Alaska State-Operated School System to the Regional Educational Attendance Area system, and for FY '77 (July 1976 through June 1977), the first year of REAA operation.

Analysis Process

Approved minutes of the State Board of Education for those two years were read and coded for issues directly relating to the REAAs. These issues arose in general discussions of the Board, through Board action, or were brought to the attention of the Board by others in attendance. Visitors to meetings were an especially important source of REAA-related comments in FY '77, as Board practice, discussed below, had been modified during the previous year to encourage more interaction with local boards at the State Board Meetings.

The analysis process had several limitations. There was considerable latitude for judgment about what constituted a REAA issue. Topics concerning all districts in the state, rural districts generally, or a unique situation in only one REAA were not usually considered a REAA topic. The greatest difficulty came in separating issues generated by or unique to the creation of the REAAs from general issues affecting all districts, such as regulations and hearings, and from rural issues which affect some districts other than REAAs, such as construction, Hootch, and financing small schools. Most of these latter were not counted and their inclusion would have greatly increased the number of times REAA-related topics were discussed.

Further, the coding system did not take into account the amount of time directed to an issue, only that it had come up during the meeting. Some issues, for example, were brought up by one person and dismissed quickly, while other issues generated lengthy discussions involving several people.

Given these limitations, the data provided by the analysis of State Board minutes generated the following types of information: (1) they indicated trends about the types of REAA issues discussed and the frequency of discussion; and (2) it provided an historic source for the identification of direct comment on REAA issues of special interest.

Trends

From the seventeen Board meeting minutes analyzed, 88 REAA-related discussions were identified. Fifty-seven separate topics were recorded,

although later some were easily grouped with others to form larger categories. These figures seem to indicate a wide range of subjects and frequent discussion of REAA-related topics, which is supported by reading the minutes. Discussions appear rather evenly spaced across meetings, with only one meeting showing no discussion of a REAA topic.

The State Board met eight times each of the years under study, plus one special session in FY '76. The location of meetings was less centered in Anchorage and Juneau in FY '77 than in FY '76, as can be seen in the chart below.

Location of Board Meetings	
FY '76 (8 meetings and 1 special session)	FY '77 (8 meetings)
Juneau (4)	Juneau (2)
Anchorage (3)	Anchorage
Kodiak	Fairbanks
Sitka	Ketchikan
	Kodiak
	Kotzebue and Nome
	Seward

This shift in meeting locations away from Juneau and Anchorage appeared to be a direct result of a Board priority.

> *...at the July session of the State Board of Education, one of the priorities had been the Board's intention to get out and spend more time with the local boards. It had been decided that the first place to visit was to be the Northwest Arctic School District.* [It was stated] *that the Board feels very strongly that they want to assist local boards in every way, especially following their commitment to local control for the new districts. (9/76)*

Although only three REAA communities were sites for Board meetings, visitors from many of the other REAAs showed up at meetings in nearby (in Alaska terms) locations. At least one visitor, a superintendent, commented favorably on this approach to meeting location:

> [He] *said that he appreciated seeing the Board in action and that they took the time to visit the outer districts so that the educators would have the opportunity to talk to them. He felt it a step in the right direction to get away from the urban centers and out into the rural areas. (9/76)*

The three most frequently mentioned REAA issues differed by year as noted below:

Most frequently mentioned REAA issues	
FY '76	FY '77
School Board Development	Finance
Reports to the Board on REAA Progress	Lau Compliance
Regulations--waive or postpone for REAAs	BIA School Transfer

Local control as related to REAAs was mentioned less frequently than those above, but equally in both years. REAA/Department of Education (DOE) relations was an issue in both years. As a topic, appreciation to established districts for their help to the REAAs was recorded only in FY '76. Topics of recall statute and high school programs were noted only in FY '77. Most other issues surfaced only once.

REAA-Related Comments

The following comments are quoted directly from the approved Board Minutes. Issues are presented here in approximately the order of frequency with which they occurred over the two-year period except for those noted under "Other Issues." This is not necessarily the same order they might be in if importance rather than frequency had been the criterion.

REAA School Board Development/Training

> *For school board training, for the emerging districts $373,000 was received. The boundary hearings, elections and regional resource centers planning will also be included in this amount. (7/75)*
>
> [Board member] *felt that it was very important that the State Department of Education assume the leadership role for developing a philosophy for school board training. It was requested that the Board receive a status report on school board training at each meeting. (7/75)*
>
> *...providing assistance in planning programs for emerging and existing school districts ties in with*

decentralization of the unorganized borough schools' activities. The Department also has a contract with NWREL to identify needs and suggest how the department can reorganize in order to respond to the kind of requests that will be coming from the new districts. (8/75)

Another concern is that after the initial school board training is completed, what assurances will they receive that assistance won't be dropped. (10/75)

...another area needing clarification is the term 'school board training' that has been used for activities relating to the decentralization.... The Board felt that a position on school board training should be developed.... It was determined that this should not be limited to just the REAAs, but should include other school boards as well. (12/75)

...Alaska Association of School Boards' training materials...are the same materials that he uses in training various school boards around the state, and that he will use with the REAA boards...the Association did increase its dues for this current year, and primarily in recognition of the fact that calls for assistance would go up with the emergence of the new districts. (1/76)

School board members and administrators around the state have been eager to help, and that is the only way a program like this [REAA school board development] *can work. The department will coordinate others to go out and assist. (3/76)*

[A REAA Superintendent] *felt that the school district itself should be responsible for the training of new board members, calling upon the expertise of the older members, the State Board or the Department of Education. But to have this function totally sponsored and supported, with guidelines written by the Department, he felt, is a type of inbreeding. He felt that board members totally trained by the Department would mean the loss of some of the individual thinking, philosophies and differences of the districts. (12/76)*

REAA Finance Problems

Senator ___ also stated that during the last session, the State Senate voted unanimously on the budget, which included the intent authorizing the Department of Education to come in with supplemental appropriation requests. He felt it was not the intent of Senate Bill 35 to cut hot lunch programs, teacher aides, janitors, etc., but that it was realized that decentralizing the State-Operated School System is going to cost more. (9/76)

...Superintendent of the ___ School District was concerned that he had not received procedures on how to follow up to the legislature on supplemental appropriations. (1/77)

...Superintendent of the ___ School District commented on HB 212, which would revise the foundation support program. He stated that his district is currently funded at 133.75 percent area differential, but there is a very strong possibility that they will be reduced to 112 percent. In past years, they have been adequately funded, and this cut will put them in severe financial difficulties. (5/77)

...Superintendent of the ___ School District added that his district will also suffer from the same cut in area differential. It was his feeling that the cost differential cutting has no data on which to base the change. (5/77)

President of the ___ School Board expressed his concern over the high cost of insurance. (5/77)

President of the ___ School District expressed his concern over the high cost of utilities. His district is presently paying for many of the total community utility costs, while the school itself is using only a small percentage of this total. (5/77)

REAA/BIA Relations

[Board Member] *commented that since Kotzebue was the first place that had the major takeover of the BIA school, it will set the tone for the rest, and the success or failure of what happens in Kotzebue will*

cause other areas to question whether they wish to join the REAAs, in view of the cut-backs. (9/76)

[The Commissioner] *responded that the Constitution of the State of Alaska states that there shall be one system of education within the state. It is the policy of the Department that if a new district wants to take over a BIA school, it is their decision along with the community that is affected. (12/76)*

[Board Member] *stated that during his time on the State Board it has been understood by the Department, the State Board and the BIA, that these school buildings should meet state standards, but that transfers were not based solely on that fact. What is best educationally is the overriding factor. (12/76)*

[Regional Director for the Bureau of Indian Affairs] *explained the BIA's position. He stated that the people in the villages have expressed their concern regarding the funding, and their fear of possibly losing the programs that their children now benefit from. ...said that the Bureau would be unable to acknowledge the transfer of schools unless so requested by each individual village. (1/77)*

Senator ____ discussed with the Board his concern about the transfer of the BIA schools to the REAAs. He commented that there are a number of schools which are presently under BIA jurisdiction that do not want to be transferred to the REAAs because they feel the level of funding for the REAAs is insufficient. He stated that unless the State Board and the Department of Education take a leadership role by providing assistance through transition to the BIA schools that wish to turn over, he believed the whole process would become extremely complicated. (1/77)

[The Commissioner] *replied that even though last year the BIA had agreed to take students through the local boards, it was his understanding that the students' rights are protected, and there is nothing that can be done to prevent their attending Mt. Edgecumbe or any other school. The REAAs have the responsibility to provide a secondary education, but parents have*

the right to send their children where they feel they will receive the best education. (3/77)

Local Control and REAAs

[Telegram from REAA Board] *Our REAA strongly supports village-based high schools but just as strongly opposes many of the proposed changes in the regulations ...and the process by which the hearing was publicly advertised. This REAA's opposition is focused on not recognizing the authority of the REAA and other local organizations to control the decision-making process regarding the developments and administration of local high schools. In the view of this REAA the proposed regulation changes circumvent the intent of SB 35. (3/76)*

[Board Member] *said that she thought that everyone across the country was watching to see how much control the state is going to have over these emerging REAAs because they are 100% funded. She expressed hope that it can be done with a minimum amount. (5/76)*

[Board Member] *commented that in reference to the new REAA boards, if the people in the larger communities took as much interest in education as those in the REAAs, many of the problems would disappear. (5/76)*

[Board Member] *stated that the bulk of the people he has talked to don't understand the role of the local school board, and the role that the parent plays with the local school board. He felt that many people are unaware that they can attend board meetings and don't understand how to change things that displease them. (6/76)*

There is less state control on the new REAAs, than with the former State-Operated School system. He [the Commissioner] *said that every effort would be made to allow flexibility at the local level, and will treat the small rural school districts no differently than Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau or Nome. (9/76)*

[Board Member] *said that in regard to the Board's defining basic education, when local control was granted*

to the small district, it was felt that more was known at the local level as to what the needs were than at any other level. These small districts are the ones that should be developing the policies through the community schools, getting response from the village people, bringing it to the State Board if necessary, and possibly to the legislature. She said that she felt the small villages need to decide what is basic. (9/76)

[REAA Board Member] *commented on local control in the REAAs. He stated that under SOS, the districts had no control over the people or the schools. He felt the best thing that ever could have happened is giving them the local control, although he felt that there is still too much federal and state intervention. (12/76)*

REAA/DOE/OCR*: Lau Compliance Plan

[DOE Staff Member] *said that the Department of Education has offered to enter into voluntary negotiations with OCR, in behalf of the 21 REAAs, since their time and resources are limited. She pointed out that the overriding concern is to support the decision-making authority of the new REAA school boards. (5/76)*

[Commissioner] *felt that too much time had been spent on this subject, and if the districts were given the option of complying with the detailed requirements OCR is proposing, or losing federal funding, they would probably forego the federal monies. (5/77)*

[Board Member] *expressed his concern about the Civil Rights issue, and said that every action on the part of the State Board and Department of Education indicates they are totally dedicated to trying to improve civil rights and bilingual and bicultural education. Mr. ____ also commented that the Department and the state's school districts are being 'shoved and pushed around' too much. (5/77)*

[REAA Superintendent] *opposed the plan and presented the endorsements of others in opposition. He stated that it exceeds the requirements of the Office of Civil Rights for a compliance plan and restricts the options available to local school boards in determining*

*Office of Civil Rights

program alternatives for their students. Objections were made to the memorandum of agreement as being unfair to the districts. Mr. ____ feels that the Office of Civil Rights should deal directly with the individual school districts. (6/77)

REAA/DOE Relations

[Board Member] *disagreed with pressing these regulations, or any form of them, on the local boards at this time. He said he thought that the Board had one primary responsibility to these local boards in the next year, and that is to establish trust. He expressed his concern that the new boards might feel that the State Board is taking away the powers that have just been given to them. (5/76)*

[Superintendent] *expressed his concern with the Department's reluctance to allow the new districts to handle their own affairs; the confusion regarding directives from the Department; the many problems associated with the certification of teachers; the deficit which faces them, and the prospect of cutting services to the students. (9/76)*

[REAA Board President] *...reiterated part of what Mr. ____ said regarding communications problems with the Department, and added that she felt many of the meetings involving the new districts were unnecessary and time-consuming. (9/76)*

[REAA Superintendent] *...came before the Board to express the feelings of their Board, that the Department's and the State Board of Education's assistance in forming of the new districts had always been honest and sincere, even though the answers were not always what they wanted to hear. (12/76)*

We [a REAA] *have received assistance from so many people in the State Education Department and the State Board that it would take perhaps a whole page to list them. (12/76)*

Other REAA-Related Issues

Recall

He asked that the State Board be cautious in approving the ____ School Board recall petition. It was his contention that when a board...could no longer make a decision without the fear of recall, it would take away any tool that might be there for better education in the district. (5/77)

The recall matter was discussed as to certain portions of the statute which may need to be altered, particularly as it applies to REAAs which differ from the cities and boroughs...Mr. ____ [Board Member] expressed concern over the Board of Education being involved in the matter, rather than the Office of the Lieutenant Governor. (6/77)

Membership on the State Board of Education (SB 124)

In his [Board Member] opinion, the wording of this bill could imply that the present State Board was not sensitive to education in the rural areas; that it could cause a polarization effect (urban vs. rural), and that it could be a self-defeating action. He objected, unless it could be shown that it would be beneficial to education in this state.

[Board Member] stated that it was her opinion that until last July when the AUBSD was dissolved and the new REAAs were formed, that the AUBSD Board had been in contact with the outlying areas to get their input about the implementation of the REAAs, and that now that there is no longer an AUBSD Board, the rural areas feel they don't have that same kind of input into the decisions that are being made by the State Board of Education. (3/77)

School Construction/Department of Public Works

[REAA Superintendent] was concerned about the amount of money that the Department of Public Works was supposedly going to take from their funding of construction to apply towards inspection service, review of schematic drawings, etc., ...there would be a lesser amount of funding left for construction. (1/77)

[Board Member] *stated that the State Board has gone on record many times as trying to tighten up the type of structures that are being built in the rural areas. She felt that this was part of the purpose of the reorganization of the Department of Public Works, inasmuch as buildings that were designed for California will not be allowed to be built in the bush. (1/77)*

Regional Government

During the last legislative session, several other agencies felt that perhaps the REAAs were a way to deliver services provided by the state to the Unorganized Borough.... The concern of the Department of Community and Regional Affairs is if the Unorganized Borough is split up into so many different districts, in the creation of specific boards with perhaps different boundaries, there will be a great deal of confusion with the overlapping and conflicting jurisdiction. A task force was convened.... Basically, the proposals call for dividing the now existing Unorganized Borough using REAA boundaries, and when necessary, combining REAAs to coincide with the Regional Native Associations. [DCRA Staff Member] *(1/77)*

Village High Schools

[Rural resident] *stated that he felt that keeping the students in their villages for their high school education was important. He felt that if the students could be kept in their own village up to even the sophomore year, that this would provide a better education for them. He said he thought the Title money should continue and that one of his concerns was the continuation of the Native culture, such as the language and art. He commented that when he had gone to school, the students were reprimanded if they spoke the Eskimo language, whereas now, there is an attempt to teach it. (9/76)*

[Rural resident] *said that formerly, it was felt that an education was not necessary for people who remained in the villages.... (9/76)*

[Rural resident] *commented that it was important for the villages to keep the children at home--that they are too young at the age of 13 or 14 to leave the villages. (9/76)*

Teachers/Curriculum

[REAA Superintendent] *responded that their main problem has been with the certification of teachers. He felt one improvement had been that the teachers had to account to the school boards, and that they had become better as a result. He added, however, that they have not been able as yet to develop a curriculum committee that has representatives from the total region to work with. He hoped that the accreditation the Department is working on will give them some real help. (9/76)*

Other Issues

Other issues directly concerned with the REAAs discussed in the State Board Minutes but not in this series of comments included:

Many problems facing REAAs
Vocational Education
Federal Regulation/Funds
Non-school Use of REAA Facilities
Teacher Turnover
Teacher Negotiations
Teacher Transfers Among REAAs
Student Representative on REAA Boards
REAA Takeover of Boarding Home Program
Military Base Schools
Need for Legal Counsel
Eligibility for Election to REAA Boards
Proposed REAA Boundaries/Hearings
Clearinghouse for REAA Superintendent Hire

REAA SUPERINTENDENTS ADDRESS THE FIRST YEAR

Kathryn A. Hecht

At the October 1977 meeting of the Alaska Association of School Administrators, a panel entitled "REAA Report - The First Year Successes and Failures" took place. Superintendents from five REAAs spoke. Their comments included not only frank statements about both positive and negative aspects of their first year of REAA operation, but also some thoughtful comments on the difficulty of evaluating the situation and needs and opportunities for the future.*

The Difficulty of Evaluating the REAAs: Year One

There is difficulty in evaluating. There was no control in the experiment--but all experiments. All of the state schools went at one time. We don't know what would have happened had some stayed in the state system a while longer. There was such a dynamic environment at the time. There were so many variables operating. It was not just the fact that we were going into a brand new school district, but at the same time we were asked to create new high school facilities, we were asked for bilingual programs.... The whole thing occurred in such a dynamic movement of activity. It is hard to say what would have happened had it not all taken place at one time.

I submit to you that whether something is a success or failure probably depends a lot on the perspective you have. For example, I think many of the local people who felt local control would mean full control of hiring and firing and the whole bit probably look at it as a failure. I think some of the teachers who hoped benefits were going to continue to escalate as they have in the past probably consider it a failure.

Educating the Public

We had the problem of convincing the district that we were a local school district and convincing the teachers. I don't know that everybody really, really understands that at the present time--that we are a local school district and we have local control.

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*These comments were selected and edited by Kathryn Hecht. Given difficulties of tape transcription, the quotes may not be exact but attempts were made to keep the meaning intact.

Our role in the districts, stated in the most cynical way, was to provide jobs One of the successes I would hope would be that perhaps we turned people around and got them to think about what they want out of school. Many of the people in our villages were so into the power aspect of getting a say in things that they really didn't know what to do once they got that say. One of our adult education roles was to try to get them to realize what real options they had and letting us contribute to implementing those options.

Board Members, Elections, and Training

By creating these new districts, you create many, many more board members to elect. You're going to get some inept board members. You're going to get a lot less trained people than when you could pick five or ten of the best around the state. Now we've got hundreds of people on the boards and obviously you are going to get some with much less training. You need a lot of work done. This often causes a problem. I can't even get people to run for some of the seats. The matter of elections is a real difficulty for us. You've got people at one end of the district who don't know anything about the name or reputation of somebody at the other end, and they vote at large.

They need to learn about the process of negotiating with teachers. If they don't, they can lose control in a hurry. I've had to be patient and try to be tough. I had to do a lot of talking and was becoming unpopular with some of my people. More needs to be done in teaching the people out in the villages as to responsibilities and negotiating and what to look for. Otherwise, the teachers can overpower them and we'd lose a lot of money.

Priorities: Facilities and Personnel

One of the top priorities we had was to start a secondary school the first year. One of the main problems that had to be faced was not having adequate facilities. It meant we had to rent old houses and renovate them so we could carry on classes. The response on the part of the students was just wonderful.

...I wasn't ready to take on adult education and the adult education I had to take on was how to train somebody to type, how to train somebody to keep books, how to train somebody to keep furnaces going, how to train somebody to even recognize a personnel record, let alone begin to make some kind of entry into it.

Improvement in the System/Opportunities for Improving Programs

First of all, there was definitely some local autonomy. Not to the degree that some people wanted but certainly much more than what had been given under the state system. Now I think the people feel that the districts are much more responsive to them than someone out of Anchorage or Juneau. Secondly, I think there is great flexibility for a superintendent or a board to operate. We don't have all of the red tape to go through that an area superintendent used to have. The REAA can authorize things to happen very quickly. This I see is a very successful part of the program.

The educational programs have a great opportunity for improvement. I think there is a lot of innovation, a lot of experimentation, that can take place now that probably couldn't under the state system. I think we can tailor our particular district's efforts towards the local needs of that district rather than looking at it from state-wide perspective. We can really have an opportunity to build in some quality, try some different things. If it doesn't work we can easily get rid of it and try something else.

Political Pressures

I think that there is less susceptibility in the political arena. It used to be that a citizen could get ahold of a legislator and change things immediately. This susceptibility has been reduced considerably. I think the local boards feel a pride in being able to run their own affairs and stand up against political pressures.

Overall Success

I think overall it was a 'helluva' successful year. We're very pleased with local control, although there were some problems in terms of the logistics of setting up the

districts. We've got a good situation, but I will never at any time mention it too publicly, particularly in Juneau, because it is advantageous not to do so.

In summary, as far as we the superintendents on the panel are concerned, it sounds to me that we are all happy with local control. We feel that the legislation was good. We feel like we have better operations and are doing a better job with kids than we were prior to the passage of the legislation.

COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF A REAA: A CASE STUDY EMPHASIZING CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

Paul A. Goodwin

The establishment of local control of education was mandated by the legislation known as Senate Bill 35 (SB 35). The purpose of this paper is to examine and report on the effect of the legislation as perceived by the members of a rural community.

Financial considerations limited the scope of the research effort to sample rural opinion for this report. Although the questionnaires, board minutes and other means were used to collect information from all REAAs, the preferred method would have been to gather first-hand knowledge by visiting each REAA and all its communities. Since this was not possible, we chose to use a case study approach to supplement the information obtained from these other sources as well as to see what different types of responses or information could be collected in this way. Expense and time associated with visiting the greatly separated communities limited the case study approach to only one REAA and within that one REAA, travel was limited to the central community. However, the number of people from outlying areas traveling to the central community allowed us to obtain opinions from roughly fifty percent of all the communities located within the chosen REAA. Nevertheless, as the differences of opinion surrounding a given issue varies from community to community, all differences may not be thoroughly dealt with in this report.

In selecting a REAA for the case study, five criteria were considered: (1) the administrative seat must be located in a central community which is part of the REAA; (2) the REAA must contain a multicultural population; (3) the REAA must contain a BIA school; (4) the REAA chosen for the case study should not be one that has been dealt with elsewhere in the overall study; and (5) the REAA must be convenient for travel.

Concerning the results and how they were arrived at, the author spent five days in the REAA central community and talked with parents, teachers, administrators, and in some cases, bystanders, in the effort to assess the rural point of view concerning the issue of local control of education. Each individual, rather than being "interviewed," was allowed to "free-associate" after introductory comments were given by the author. These introductory comments concerned the intent of this report. In an attempt to focus the conversations, three general questions were prepared: "Why did you and/or other members of the community think it necessary to have local control of education?"; "Did the legislation that set up the REAA adequately address your, or the community's, original concerns regarding education?"; and "How has the establishment of local control of education affected the quality of education in your community or REAA?" Usually subsequent questions were asked as the responses to the above questions developed.

In virtually every case, the responses were offered freely and in the spirit of interest and concern. In many cases, a given respondent would relate his/her concerns regarding local control of education for well over an hour; in some cases for well over two hours. In all cases, the author attempted to maintain the integrity of the response concerning a given topic, however; the author's interpretation has been added to unify the report. In that regard, this case study is not so much concerned with exactly what was said, but with the meaning of what was said. What follows, then, is hopefully not just a codification of responses given, but a discussion of the outstanding core issues, as determined by the rather obvious common interest among the respondents. The paper is arranged so as to place the topic receiving the most response first. Thus, as one reads this report, topics will appear in the same order and with roughly the same emphasis as was given by the members of the rural community.

Why Local Control of Education was Desired

The first question asked ("Why did you and/or other members of the community think it necessary to have local control of education?") received responses that strongly suggested a unanimous feeling in the community regarding the entire issue of local control. Everyone who was asked the question agreed that local control was originally thought to be the right way to handle education. Most people were not in agreement concerning why this was thought to be the case. Solicited opinions indicated that local control was originally considered necessary for a variety of reasons. Some persons maintained that it was necessary to assure the timely maintenance of school facilities. Others felt that it would better provide for community input concerning the selection of teachers and administrators. Yet others felt that local control would simply make the school system, and particularly the administration, "more responsive" to community need and interest.

In spite of this diversity of opinion, one was able to discern a central theme linking all of the reasons given for the necessity for local control of education to a more general community concern: The reduction of the influence of what are perceived as culturally and socially irrelevant bureaucracies in favor of systems that are neither bureaucratic, nor culturally or socially irrelevant.

In the case of education, cultural and social relevance is an issue of considerable importance. However, in the past, this relevance has had a good deal of attention drawn away from it by the very nature of the bureaucracy that existed at the time: i.e., State Operated Schools (SOS). Thus, as the community responded to the question of this section, the story about how the SOS administrators and teachers would pay little attention to education in lieu of "sitting at their desk filling out papers for Anchorage" (Anchorage is where the SOS administrative seat was located) was often heard. The rural

community apparently did not well understand the bureaucratic necessity of "filling out papers for Anchorage."

A culturally relevant perspective concerning the motivation that originally gave rise to the movement toward local control is implied here. That is to say, while people offered specific reasons, which presumably identified the motivation for local control (e.g., "better maintenance of facilities"), the author suggests that what is probably closer to the case is that members of the rural community wished local control more to get rid of the culturally and socially irrelevant bureaucracy than for the rather pat, more mundane reasons that were given in this interview situation.

It would be incorrect, however, to assume that the impetus for local control of education was entirely an extension on the motivation behind local control in general. In point of fact, within the rural community there is a substantial regard for the quality of education. Although this regard for educational quality is left somewhat unarticulated, it is fairly easy to see that the concern for quality has been an important motivating factor in obtaining local control. Consider, for example, that many respondents felt that local control was necessary so as to provide for community input in the selection of teachers and administrators. That is, many people felt that if the community could control the hiring of, for instance, teachers, "education would get better."

School Board Role

The second question ("Did the legislation that set up the REAA adequately address your, or the community's, original concerns regarding education?") is somewhat more complicated than the first, in that it involves current community problems. For this reason there was no lack of opinion.

On the average, the rural community responded in the affirmative to the question. That is, most agreed that the REAA concept, and attendant legislation, did indeed address the original concerns regarding education. Whether the legislation adequately addressed the original concerns of the community regarding education is the questionable point. What follows is the author's attempt to duplicate the opinions surrounding the individual issues that made up given answers to the question. The question of the adequacy of the legislation may then fall into perspective.

While it was generally agreed that the establishment of the REAA did address many local problems associated with education, it was also generally agreed that the operation of the REAA resulted in the development of many more problems. The most outstanding of these problems is the concern regarding the overall competence of the newly formed Regional School Boards and Community School Committees.

Most of those who brought up the issue of board competence stated that the majority of the members of the various boards simply did not know what it was that a board was supposed to do. Many respondents (including board members) supported their opinion by pointing out that some Regional Board members and many Community School Committee (CSC) members were not literate; many respondents were of the opinion that the average school board member* had a very poor education. Consequently, they felt these board members could not be expected to deal effectively with the sorts of problems with which they were asked to deal. Comments such as these were made by Natives, as well as non-Natives, and by the educated and non-educated people of the community.

Given other evidence as well, it may be assumed that the statements concerning the literacy and educational background of many of the school board members are essentially correct. One then wonders why members judged unqualified were elected to the board. One also wonders how the function of a school board, made up of such members, is affected. The former query is dealt with in a later section. Concerning the latter query, it was found that from the point of view of many residents of the rural community, such a school board does not work very well at all.

For example, among the more common critical comments were: "...it is difficult to get a quorum because board members use the occasion of a school board meeting to party"; "Most board members just sit there and don't say anything while a few aggressive types dominate the whole meeting"; and "The board spends too much time on personnel matters, maintenance and other details while ignoring the important issues."

In most cases, it was difficult to determine precisely what the respondents meant. For instance, what does a person mean when he/she says "...members use the occasion of a school board meeting to party"? In particular, what do they mean by "party"? What sort of behavior have they witnessed?

Vague answers to questions of the sort listed above leads one to believe that perhaps rather than some first-hand knowledge concerning board competence, most people responded on the basis of peer-perception, or some other such process. Except for isolated events, most respondents could not personally affirm the behavior of any board member. However, it was all too often assumed that if a given board member did not attend a meeting, that individual was "partying." It is not the purpose of this report to make a case for or against the contention that some board members party so much that quorums cannot be achieved. The fact is, rural school boards regularly hold meetings that are attended by a quorum. What should be understood about this particular community is that the matter of partying seems to have led to a general feeling that some of the board members are not competent.

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* It was often difficult to tell whether people were referring to the REAA Board or the Community School Committee or both. For this discussion,

Even if the board were working perfectly, such assumptions by the community would tend to reduce its effectiveness.

To a lesser degree, the same is true of the community observation that a few aggressive individuals dominate the board. While it may seem that a few dominate, the facts may be quite different. As one respondent realized and commented upon, the board method of governing (and, indeed, formal education itself) is imposed onto a culture that, if left alone, would govern differently. Inasmuch as the boards are comprised of culturally different people, they often arrive at many curious operational compromises which allow them to function. One such compromise is the case where various board members meet informally, in some cases many times, to discuss issues before the formal meeting. When the formal meeting begins, it is not uncommon, especially for the Native people, to vote rapidly and unanimously on a given issue. Upon seeing such a process, many outsiders would tend to believe that at least some of the Native element of the board were complacent. But as we have seen, this could very possibly be a judgment that while basically sound in a Western cultural sense, may be otherwise completely incorrect. Judgments related to other characteristics of rural school board operations became apparent in the following examples.

If one reads the REAA Board minutes, he or she might conclude that the board and administrative functions are interchanged. As one of the more common critical comments concerning the board under study has indicated, the board is said to be far too involved in matters that are usually considered administrative, while being far too little involved in educational policy and programs. This suggests that the administration is largely responsible for educational policy and programs. Administrators are usually hired from outside the REAA and if they are in control of educational policy and programs, then the rural community itself would seem to have gained only a new administrative role in acquiring local control of education. On the face of it, the board has not exercised its authority to establish policy or programs that would affect educational quality. Many of the administrators who were questioned agreed with the implications attendant to the apparent reversal of board and administrative roles in the rural community. However, the rural school board members had a different opinion of this reversal of roles.

From the point of view of a Native member, involvement in personnel matters, for instance is unquestionably an appropriate role of a local school board. The propriety of this was emphasized by comparing the older SOS and BIA school systems with the present system. The author was told that whereas the SOS and BIA systems often solicited local input regarding the hiring of a new teacher (many local advisory school boards to SOS and BIA had been set up in Alaska), it was never the case that the new teacher had any sort of real commitment to an employer-employee relationship with the community. According to many Native respondents, these teachers owed

"Board" will be used in the singular, as the REAA Board, even though comments may apply to community boards as well.

allegiance to "Anchorage or Juneau" (i.e., the administration). Thus, it was said, those teachers could do "anything they wanted to do" even if doing it was against the wishes of the community. In contrast, the present system allows the board to respond to local concern and, if warranted, fire a teacher. It was held that this new board power rendered the current group of teachers a good deal more responsive than the teachers of the past. Moreover, it was quite emphatically stated that this new responsiveness of the teachers would result in a higher quality of education for the children.

Further concerning the quality of education, one CSC member responded that his group had become quite involved in the subject. When asked what sort of involvement this was, he explained that the CSC had recently begun changing the role of the local school principal. That is, in the SOS days, and for a part of the REAA period of operation, the principal functioned largely as an "administrator of school business," meaning that the principal was primarily concerned with reporting requirements, record keeping, letter writing, etc. In changing the role of the principal, the CSC had in mind that the principal should be an "administrator of teachers" instead of an "administrator of business." That way, he said, the principal could teach as well as keep abreast of the quality of teaching in his school.

Continuing, the CSC member commented on the Board's becoming involved in "minimum requirements testing." Evidently the CSC was examining the idea of requiring all the graduates of the sixth and twelfth grades to take tests that would assess their actual academic capabilities. In this way, the school would be assured that the graduates of today "would not be like the ones who used to graduate around here."

Without belaboring the point, we should be able to see that while the boards may need training in the procedural or functional aspects of their role in education, little or no training is needed in the philosophical aspects. That is to say, the boards, clearly, have already assumed their appropriate role: that of being concerned about the quality and content of their children's education. However, this does not appear to be well understood by many of those in either the administration or the community. What often happens, then, is that many develop possibly inappropriate feelings concerning the board's competence. However, as may be inferred, the major problem is not the board's competence, necessarily, but the different ways that the board looks at things. Because a particular board has one way of looking at something, and another board or administration has a different way of looking at the same thing, misunderstandings can occur.

The Relationships Between the Boards and Between the Boards and Administration

The relationships that exist between the Regional School Board and the Community School Committee (CSC) varies from one REAA to another (see report by S. Horton). Further, within an REAA, the relationship between one CSC and the Regional Board can be quite different from the corresponding relationship of another CSC. That this can occur is related to the fact that no firm guidelines exist that would define the relationships. Hence, within a given REAA, one CSC may be very persuasive with respect to the educational affairs of the Regional Board and/or administration, while another will simply acquiesce.

When this topic came up, further questioning revealed that the lack of definition of the relationship between the Regional Board and the CSC was thought to be a weakness of the REAA system. When the suggestion was made that the State step in to establish firm guidelines, most respondents replied with an unequivocal "no." They felt that the relationship could better be established by some scheme involving board training.

Another weak point was considered to be the lack of definition in the relationships between the various boards and administration. For example, was the local school principal answerable to the Regional Board or to the CSC or to the Superintendent? With regard to this particular relational problem, some within administration hinted that the State should develop guidelines. However, respondents in general again felt that this sort of problem could be dealt with most effectively by board training.

Unfortunately, this perceived importance of board training is, many times, derived from considerations that are ill-defined. Consequently, no unanimous opinion can be obtained concerning the sort of board training the rural community feels that it needs. Some suggest that the board be given a "three R's" orientation concerning how a board works. Others suggest that this would be fine, but what is really needed is "more competent" people on the board, then training.

In the opinion of the author, the training that might be offered a rural school board should stress the relationships that must exist between boards, and between boards and administrations, if the system is to funciton effectively. Cross-cultural training, of an applied, non-theoretical nature, might be offered to the administrations as well as to the boards so as to develop the awareness needed for viable communication.

The Political Process in the Cross-Cultural Setting

To answer the question of how and why so-called incompetent board

members are elected, one must consider how the Western political process operates in its cross-culturally transplanted form.

Within the Western culture, it is a tacit assumption that the political process will select, from among many, the person best suited to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of a given office. To no small degree, this selection is accomplished by pitting one candidate for a given office against another. The candidate who is best able to express himself, and who is then best able to manipulate the mass media, is the candidate who is perceived by the populace to be the one most suited to fill the office. While this does not always work in a Western community, it works often enough that a popular faith in the system becomes established.

With the REAA legislation, we have not only the legislation itself, but also a political process, imposed on a culturally different setting. This suggests operational problems. In the case of the legislation, an operational mode can be established largely by definition. A REAA will operate according to fairly well defined rules and regulations. In the case of the election process, however, definitional considerations can only affect the procedure; not the process. That is, while the State can impose a conformity on a rural election procedure (i.e., filing petitions, election judges, etc.), the State cannot impose conformity on the process.

In the rural community, one often sees unique variations on the theme of the election process. For instance, in the more traditional areas, a slate of candidates may run for an office, but it is often a foregone conclusion who will finally be elected. Members of important families, or those who are otherwise well known, are usually elected over those who may be technically better qualified to fulfill the responsibilies of the given office. For this reason, the election campaign is virtually non-existent in the more traditional areas of rural Alaska. It would seem that the Western election process has been supplanted in the rural Alaskan community by more culturally relevant traditions.

But what is the outcome of a culturally modified political process? Will the new process result in a better or worse condition for rural Alaska? In those cases where the new political process is found to better conditions, what can the State do to enhance the process?

In the opinion of the author, if the first two questions were specifically asked of a given traditional community, the answer would be one that stressed self-determination. The traditional community would not be so much concerned with the outcome of their particular brand of political process, as they would be with the thought that they could do it themselves. This is not to say that the traditional communities would not welcome a few State-initiated changes. In fact, in response to questions

similar to the third kind, rural communities suggested such changes.

In particular, the changes suggested in the REAA under study were: (1) The State Election Office should devise means that would allow them to be better able to administer elections in a more timely fashion; and (2) The State Election Office should devise filing procedures, etc., that are more relevant to community understanding and circumstance.

These suggestions were given in view of the most recent school board elections. In some REAAs, the elections were characterized as untimely and confusing. Concerning point (1) above, many people stated that they did not know of the election until it was too late. With regard to (2), a few individuals thought the current filing procedure for school board seats to be essentially discriminatory. They apparently based their thinking on the feeling that most traditional candidates would not understand the necessity for obtaining a petition to run for a school board seat. Moreover, most of the would-be traditional candidates would not be able to read or write and they would not be familiar with the methods for completing a petition. It was said that when faced with the unfamiliarity associated with running for office, most traditionally oriented people would rather just forget the whole thing. In view of these considerations, one person suggested that a declared interest should be sufficient justification for placing a person's name on the ballot. Given the cultural context of local elections, this suggestion is not without merit.

The Resurfacing of the Issue of Local Control of Education within the REAA

Although this topic is not of overwhelming concern within the one REAA examined, mention of it occurred frequently enough to warrant its inclusion within this report. Moreover, the inclusion of the topic will add a different dimension to the previous discussion concerning the motivation for local control of education.

By way of preface, consider the previous section which examined the original motivation for local control. There it was suggested the motivation for local control of education gained at least a portion of its momentum from the broader issue of self-determination. A case was made that further suggested that the self-determination issue was itself culturally motivated. Many of the opinions expressed by the members of the rural community tended to confirm these suggestions.

With SB 35, the rural communities have little to worry about with regard to an outside influence on local education. Nevertheless, in doing the field work for this report, it was more than occasionally heard that the "administrative center of the REAA" was somehow deficient in its ability to administer

local education. This is reminiscent of what all the rural communities were saying about Anchorage only a few years ago; now, the given REAA administrative center assumed the role once held exclusively by the larger urban centers.

For example, comments received from residents of one village located toward the perimeter of the REAA examined, indicated that the REAA center was guilty of the same "unresponsiveness" now as was Anchorage in the old days. Of particular concern was the hot lunch program. According to the people questioned, their village had requested over and over again the equipment necessary to bring their school kitchen up to standard. As the weeks and months passed by, no equipment came. As a result, the village was forced to discontinue their hot lunch program.

Questioning these people further, it was found that while they considered building maintenance to be better now, it was not that much better than when SOS was doing it. The problems associated with maintenance centered around the length of time it took to get anything done. When asked why they thought it took so long to get things repaired, one individual stated that the administrative center was "too far away and the transportation was bad."

Concerns of this nature surfaced again when the members of another village were questioned. In this case, however, the village was faced with the question of whether to keep their school BIA-operated or go with the REAA. In questioning a one-time CSC board member, it was found that the major concern of the village was how well the REAA could do as compared to the BIA. Apparently the BIA was making the local school a "model" and, as a result, was very responsive to the community. Since the village did not know if the REAA could do as well, they decided to adopt a "wait-and-see" attitude. When asked what sorts of things the REAA would have to do before they would join, all agreed that the REAA would have to demonstrate their ability in maintenance as well as responsiveness.

Cultural overtones entered into all conversations. In one case, a respondent went so far as to distinguish between the culture of the people of her area and the people of the REAA core city. Her motivation for doing this was apparently to make the case that her village was improperly placed within the REAA in question.

But, alleviating problems of this nature implies more than adjusting a few REAA boundaries. In the REAA studied for this report, one can identify two major language groups in addition to English. Also, some villages are largely traditional while some are either multi-cultural or largely Western. Therefore, to adjust REAA boundaries to account for all cultural variations possible is out of the question. This leaves dealing with the problems themselves. In the opinion of the author, this is the appropriate course of

action. In the case of villages complaining of poor maintenance, better and faster communications between the administrative center and the local CSC would be of help. At least this way the village would be more aware of what problems there were in getting, for instance, their kitchen equipment. In the case of the village that adopted the wait-and-see position, such improved communication may represent an increased responsiveness on the part of the REAA center.

Miscellaneous Topics

As might be expected, each person who responded to the inquiries that led to this report made a unique contribution. Some, because they currently worked in or had worked in a Federal program, gave opinions and examples that reflected their experience within those programs. Others who had worked in a Native organization were able to offer valuable opinions concerning the role of these organizations in education.

Because each person's background was different, the supplementary comments were varied. They cannot all be included. However, a number of these comments fit into three different categories: (1) the Native corporations; (2) the Federal programs (including the bilingual program); and (3) the boarding home program. The remainder of this section will deal with each one of these three categories one at a time.

The Native Corporations, whether profit or nonprofit, have become an integral part of the Native experience. It is not surprising, therefore, that Native corporations would somehow figure into education. What did come as a surprise in this case study was the way and the degree to which their influence was noted.

By way of explanation, the Native corporations have been formed, in one respect, to enhance the concept of local control. On the one hand, the profit corporations have been given money and land and the responsibility to manage those resources for profit. The profits made then work their way back to the Native share-holders of the corporation. On the other hand, the nonprofit corporation secures contracts and grants from various agencies to operate programs in the area where they are located. For instance, programs operated by the BIA are more and more being taken over by the Native nonprofit corporations.

At the present time, the existence of the nonprofit corporations are of greater practical value to a rural community than the existence of the profit corporations. The reason for this is that nonprofits are locally based. They employ people in the community and provide for much practical training. In addition, the nonprofit corporations establish a feeling of self-determination for the Native population of a community. One of the ways these corporations

accomplish this is to administer educational programs. As an example, the nonprofit corporation of a given region or community will often run the Federally funded Johnson O'Malley and Indian Education programs as well as the State funded Adult Basic Education Program. In this particular way, the Native corporations quite substantially figure into education. However, there is more to this.

During the case study, many Native people were approached. As they offered their opinions, the author often picked up a reference to one of the corporations. Sometimes it would be a reference related to one of their family working for a corporation; sometimes they would refer to their own employment experience. As the topic was followed up, it was learned that these people have great expectations for their profit and nonprofit enterprises. They have corresponding expectations for the children who will one day work in and manage those enterprises.

Many times it was said that the children need good educations so that they could work in the corporations. It is interesting to note that while talking about the corporations, many referred to the need for a "three R's" education.

A reaction to the poor education of the past was discernable in the frequently harsh attitude about the present educational efforts of the REAA. One young woman went so far as to condemn much of the existing school curriculum and many of the Federal programs as well. Condemning Federal programs was reasonably common, as people thought that there should be less emphasis on cultural enrichment and more emphasis on "education."

In all, it seemed that the employment market represented by the corporations acted as a strong stimulus for a good education. The older Native person seemed to have felt this more than did the young. Presumably, the corporations represented a chance for their children and they did not want that chance squandered because of a poor education

The Federal Programs, as was mentioned in the last subsection, came under fire from some in the Native community. These programs were criticized relatively more by Natives who had not worked for the corporations than by other Native people who had, or by non-Natives. On the one hand, Federal programs represent support for many activities that employ Natives. Consequently, some Natives view these programs more in terms of the money they represent than in terms of their programmatic benefit. Most non-Natives of the community are usually involved in one program activity or another (at least the ones involved in this case study were). Many are educated and thus tend to view a program in terms of its more abstract benefits. The Native, with less formal education and work experience, tends to look at a program on the basis of its more obvious or practical benefit to the child.

Thus, when no such benefits are seen, these people tend to be rather critical.

Within the latter group of people, the most commonly heard complaint was that the Federal programs concentrated too much on cultural matters. Particular criticisms sometimes centered around the bilingual education being offered in the schools, but most criticism centered on the Johnson O'Mally (JOM) courses.

While criticism of the bilingual program was rather vague, and not too frequent, the author felt that those who did not like it would rather see it replaced by a more traditional Western curriculum. On a few occasions, comments like "the children are going to need English when they grow up; not the Native language!" were heard. The JOM courses received much more criticism. The problem there was that often teachers from the lower forty-eight states would teach cultural courses to children who were a part of the local culture and who were thus familiar with it. As an example, one course was said to teach the youngsters how to snare rabbits while another taught camping; skills the children already possessed.

These criticisms suggest the Federal programs should be modified in accordance with the educational needs of the REAA. In this way, the Federal programs can become important alternatives for augmenting formal education.

The Boarding Home Program in the next few years will be a thing of the past. Enough research has been done on this subject to indicate that the demise of the boarding home program is a much desired event. According to the relatively few comments given on this subject, the community strongly agrees. However, in talking with one familiar with the subject, the demise of the program will present many of the smaller villages with unexpected problems.

To paraphrase the problem: for many years the children of high school age have been sent to a boarding home program to complete their education. As the years went by, the villages got used to not having teenaged children about during the confining winter months. In the summer, the children would come home but the many activities would keep them busy. When the REAAs were established, new, small high schools were also established. Many of the students who would normally go away to school stayed home. Some villages thus had a group of energetic teenagers with which to contend; a situation that many had not faced before. The lack of activity in the winter months caused these young people to become rather difficult. As a result, the villages were having trouble coping with their own children (the children were also having trouble coping with the new situation). Accordingly, some parents inquired as to the possibility of sending their children back to a boarding home program.

Without additional comment, this problem was handled by not shutting down the local boarding home program immediately. In this way, those students who were used to attending high school away from home could continue to do so, if they wished, until they graduated. The choice was up to the student and the parents.

Concluding Comments

When one considers the enormous problems associated with transferring all educational responsibility from the State to the local level, it is a wonder that the REAAs are working as well as they are. This is not to say that there are no problems. Clearly, there are. But the problems are small compared to the magnitude of the task.

Consider that in the REAA examined for this case study, local communities were expected to: establish educational policy and programs; assume an administrative posture; and develop ways and means to establish local high schools. And, if that were not enough, all these new tasks were expected to result in a higher quality of education.

Yet, when the author visited the community to do this case study, scarcely any reference was made of the enormity of the above-mentioned tasks. People did not view the transference of educational responsibility from the State to themselves as being a problem worthy of any particular concern. Rather, people simply accepted the responsibility and got on with business. Instead of hearing about how difficult the job was, what was heard was praise or criticism concerning some particular aspect of the job and how it was all going. If it was not an opinion on board training, or the quality of education, or the political process, then it was perhaps an opinion on some cultural feature associated with the issues.

In spite of the specific problems, virtually everyone questioned felt that the REAA was evolving in an appropriate direction. Some felt that it was evolving at an acceptable rate; others did not. The point is that everyone approached was optimistic and aware of education, and had at least a few comments to make about it. One seldom encounters such optimism or awareness in an urban area.

On that basis, the rural community seems to be too critical of itself. However, this is a healthy environment for change. In the opinion of the author, the dissidence and criticism along with the optimism and awareness cannot help but result in an educational system far better for the children than it has been in the past.

PART III -- CONTRIBUTED CHAPTERS

All contributed chapters by authors outside the Center for Northern Educational Research are included as submitted. The opinions expressed are those of the individual authors and not those of CNER. The reader is urged to critically review all papers in this section.

SURVEY OF ALASKA COMMUNITY SCHOOL COMMITTEES

Susan M. Horton

Introduction

Under Senate Bill 35, individual community advisory groups called Community School Committees (CSCs) were established in each community served by a Regional Educational Attendance Area (REAA) school. The creation of CSCs provides the opportunity for local communities to be active participants in their local schools and gives them formal contacts with their REAA boards. Since the REAAs and the CSCs are both new bodies, the guidelines and interpretations agreed upon concerning their interaction and decision-making powers are just now being established. The isolation of many of the REAAs and CSCs both from each other and from the State Department of Education has introduced the very real possibility that many REAAs and CSCs will interpret and develop their roles and responsibilities in ways that are quite different from each other.

The purpose of the study that this chapter is based upon was to get a clearer view on how the CSCs functioned during their first year in existence. The relationship between the REAA boards and the CSCs varied among and within districts, and it seemed appropriate to examine this relationship in its beginning stages.

The study focused on a description of the perceived relationship between the various CSCs and their respective REAA boards, and also attempted to describe the different roles CSCs defined for themselves besides the roles defined for them by their REAA Board. The study also focused on a description of the perceived relationship between the various CSCs and their respective REAA boards. Questions on the survey asked about CSCs' activities, decisions, REAA involvement, CSCs' perceptions of influence on decisions, and the need for CSCs.

The survey was completed by members of the Alaska Community School Committees, and it reflects what they felt was true of the situations in their communities. Survey forms were sent to 144 CSCs in March, 1977. Eighty-eight (61%) were returned, and this included at least one return from each REAA. One of the important things to remember about this survey is that some of the information the CSCs reported may have actually been in error. But the fact remains that those responses reflect how they perceived the situations they encountered.

Findings and Conclusions

Objective I. Determine how active the CSCs are.

The Community School Committees which responded to this survey appeared to be reasonably active. Most were formed just after the 1976-77 school year began, and on the average met about once a month.

1. Fifty-nine CSCs (68%) reported having members attend all or some REAA board meetings.

2. In twenty districts, over 50% of the responding CSCs reported that their members attended some board meetings.

3. Sixty-one CSCs (73%) reported having served as advisory committees for federal or state programs.

Objective II. Determine what type of decisions the CSCs make.

The survey sent out listed ten items that CSCs were likely to consider and possibly make decisions about. The items were chosen from sources that indicated those items would be appropriate or probable areas for CSCs to make decisions about. The 88 responding CSCs were asked if they had made any decisions in the ten listed areas. Theoretically, they could have indicated 880 decisions, but fewer than half that number were reported being made. There appear to be three possible reasons more decision areas were not reported by the CSCs. One reason is the inexperience of the CSCs; the second is the strong decision-making role the school administrations have played in the past; and the third reason is that the REAA boards may be reserving certain of those decision areas for themselves.

The CSCs which responded seemed to be fairly active decision makers. CSCs in districts with a small number of total CSCs were more likely to report making decisions in fewer areas. Perhaps the CSCs were bypassed in favor of direct dealing with the REAA Board.

1. The CSCs responding reported making the most decisions on the school calendar (68), use of school buildings and equipment (58), hiring and firing janitors/aides (53), student discipline (50), and school construction (46).

2. The CSCs responding reported making the fewest decisions on evaluation of staff members (25), preparing budgets for the local school (25), transfer of teachers (26), types of courses taught (38), and the school day schedule (40).

3. In ten districts, CSCs reported not making decisions in the areas listed more frequently than making decisions.

4. Of those ten districts, five had four or fewer CSCs.

Objective III. Determine the level of support and encouragement REAA Boards have given their Community School Committees.

According to the responses, the CSCs received little training and several CSCs were confused about whether or not there was a district policy defining how they should function. Complete lack of such a district policy, erroneously believing there is a policy when none exists, or believing there is no policy when one does exist are all serious problems indicated by the data. The relationship between the CSCs and REAA boards was not specifically defined when the districts were formed, and it is encouraging to see that many districts are developing guidelines for their CSCs. It is important to recognize, however, that just because there may be a REAA policy concerning CSCs does not mean the CSCs are aware of its existence.

1. Nineteen CSCs responding (22%) reported they received some training. Sixty-seven CSCs (78) reported they received no training or didn't know if they had.

2. Seventy CSCs (80%) reported they received all or some copies of their REAA Board minutes. Eighteen CSCs (10%) reported receiving no board minutes or didn't know.

3. Forty-nine of the CSCs (59%) responding reported that their REAA had a written policy concerning the functions and duties of the CSCs.

4. The responses from twelve REAAs were mixed. In eight of those districts, where at least some CSCs reported a policy, only 50% or less of the responding CSCs agreed.

Objective IV. Determine who the Community School Committees feel has the greatest influence in making certain decisions - the REAA Board, CSC, or the school administration.

The CSCs responding felt that the school administration had a much greater influence than the REAA board or CSCs on making decisions in the ten areas questioned. This is perhaps because of the past relationship between the Advisory Boards and the school administration under the Alaska State-Operated School System. In the past the administration's decision would always prevail over that of the Advisory Board's decision.

CSCs responding felt they had the greatest influence on the school calendar and the employment of classified personnel. Since classifed employees are usually local residents and the school calendar reflects the community's activities (fish camp, logging, special holidays, etc.), it is reasonable to expect the CSCs to make decisions on these matters. The CSCs reported

that they believe school administrators have the greatest influence on decisions directly related to the local school such as scheduling, courses, discipline, evaluation, and building use. CSCs apparently do not see themselves as having a lot of influence on matters in the school itself.

Objective V. Determine if the Community School Committees feel they have enough opportunity to influence local educational decisions.

1. Forty-six CSCs (54%) feel they have enough opportunity to influence local educational decisions. Twenty-eight CSCs (33%) did not feel they had enough opportunity.

2. At least one CSC reporting in 20 REAAs was satisfied with the opportunity to influence decisions.

Objective VI. Determine if the CSCs feel there is a need for their existence.

Overwhelmingly, the CSCs in every REAA reported that they felt there was a need for their existence. The very few CSCs which felt differently were found scattered in the districts with a larger than average number of CSCs; it may be that these CSCs are more likely to feel powerless. This could be a possible topic for further study.

1. Seventy-three CSCs (89%) feel there is a need for their existence, six CSCs (7%) feel there is no need, and three CSCs (4%) don't know.

Summary

The survey results were examined with reference to individual districts and to the total number of CSCs responding. Obviously there were many differences between CSCs, but it was surprising to find a lack of consistency to answers by CSCs within the same districts. For some REAA districts, the lack of a policy concerning the duties and responsibilities of the CSCs probably contributed to the inconsistent responses. In other cases, the problem of CSCs being aware of a written policy defining their role was probably the reason for the inconsistency between responses within districts.

This survey attempted to examine how the Community School Committees in Alaska perceived their function during the first year of their existence. Some of the survey results can be used to draw conclusions about how the CSCs functioned, while other survey results indicate how the CSCs perceived themselves and the situations they encountered. There are many encouraging signs that education in the REAA districts is being influenced by the local people. The CSCs are a vehicle to be used for local input, and it is hoped they will make a positive contribution to the students, parents, and community members they serve.

The balance of this chapter contains comments compiled by K. Hecht from the returns to S. Horton's survey question, "Is there a need for your Community School Committee? Please explain." Following the comments are copies of Ms. Horton's survey questionnaire and accompanying correspondence.

COMMUNITY SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS COMMENT

CSC as Continuation of ASOSS Advisory Board

Two CSC members commented about the CSC as a continuation of the ASOSS Advisory Board:

> *In this area the advisory boards simply became the CSC, and in fact used the name Advisory Committees for quite a while during the transition to REAA Board control. The continuity in citizen participation in decisions affecting the local schools over the years lies in the School Committees.*
>
> *In most cases the Committees are really a continuation of the old (ASOSS) Advisory School Boards.*

CSC/REAA: Positive Comments

Positive comments about the working relationship between the CSC and REAA Board included:

> *The REAA has been very cooperative* [about] *how we run our school. We are presently developing our own policy for our school and have been encouraged to do so by the REAA. We are heading in the direction back to the three Rs.*
>
> *The CSC is a means to have a better communications between the REAA, students, staff, and parents.*
>
> [There is] *a personality conflict between the REAA chairman and the teachers.* [The CSC] *so far has formed an effective buffer.*
>
> *We have a power struggle between teachers and REAA and CSC. The CSC and REAA work very smoothly together, but are at ends with the teachers and their demands.*
>
> *Many of the local people do not follow the REAA and* [the CSC] *is the only way they know what is going on. The CSC acts as a lobby to the REAA.*

CSC/REAA: Lack of Influence and/or Power

Several commented that the CSC either was not able to influence REAA decisions, or had the influence but lacked power:

> *The CSC has enough opportunity to influence educational decisions, but has no power.*
>
> *The REAA does not listen to the CSC.*
>
> *[CSC represents] local control and the opportunity to see that the children get the best qualified teachers available. There should be more coordination with the community and the REAA.*
>
> *CSC is very important in rural villages, but they were not approached for advice for the past year. We are CSC in name only. We are in a boat without a paddle.*
>
> *The REAA does not like to yield its power.*
>
> *So far our CSC has really made no influence on what the district decides will be done. Hopefully, this year will be better.*

CSC/REAA: Need for Definition

Two spoke specifically for the need to define or redefine the relationship between the CSC and REAA Board:

> *Our committee would like to function as the board for our school attendance area, making decisions on budget and hiring. The REAA board creates some friction. The relationship between the REAA and CSC is difficult to define.*
>
> *The CSC should have closer ties with the REAA and school administration. There is a need for the CSC to meet everyday problems as well as long-range planning. Parents should be active in the education of their children.*

Training Needs

Two comments were received on the need for training CSC board members:

> *Training is needed - how to deal with state agencies and inspectors. We need to know how far we can go.*

Since we started the CSC we never do anything. We don't know where we are standing and how to do the work. We don't know the kind of background we need or what power we have. There should be some training for this so we will know how to run this deal. Hope I hear from someone so I'll know what to do.

Need for the CSC: Local Control

The largest number of comments concerned the need for the CSCs to provide input to the teachers and school program to meet local needs and desires:

Due to the mixture of military-civilian community, there is definitely a need for a strong CSC.

There is a need for input on the local level. We are better able to represent the people.

The CSC has meant more people have become active in school affairs.

Local control and grass root input into curriculum is provided by the CSC, [and] *the CSC generates interest in education.*

The CSC is the method by which our local opinions are influencing the children's classroom.

CSCs are needed for hiring teachers; [that] *is a principal reason for CSCs.*

[There is a need for our CSC] *so that the education of our children meets the specific needs of our village and to give our local teacher the local support needed to run a good educational program.*

Without the CSC there would be less or no representation for parents at all.

[The CSC is needed] *to make sure the teacher knows what the village wants and to keep communications open between the school and the village.*

[The CSC] *is needed as an advisory committee on all school problems.*

Need for CSC: Checks and Balance

Several saw the need for the CSCs in terms of a balance and/or check on the REAA board:

> *Without the CSC there would be bedlam in our school system. It is a source of checks and balance.*
>
> *The need* [for a CSC] *is to maintain a balance in decision making, as the school system belongs to the people.*
>
> *The CSC is needed to insure that the REAA school administration and staff are responsive to the desires of the local community residents in such areas as curriculum, student rights and responsibilities, professional standards for staff, and student discipline.*

Against the Need for CSCs

Only one comment was recorded which spoke against the need for CSCs:

> *Purely a white wash* [to have CSCs]. *If the REAA and trained staff are unable to administer the schools without the CSC, we should have a new election of school board members and replace the professional staff.*

Other Comments

> *Who else cares but the CSC?*
>
> *It's our school and our children.*
>
> *The school cannot operate without the CSC.*
>
> *Everything we have or had done has been worthwhile.*
>
> [The village] *owns the building where school is taught - we have to supply our own oil, electricity, janitor and maintenance.*

Survey of Alaska Community School Committees

Please circle or fill in your answers. CSC stands for Community School Committee.

1. Who is filling out this survey form?
   The total CSC Part of the CSC CSC Chairman CSC member
2. In what month was your CSC formed? _____
3. How many times has your CSC met? _____ times
4. Have any training sessions for CSC been provided for your members?
   Yes (how many? ___) No Don't know
5. How many REAA school board meetings have members of your CSC attended?
   _____ meetings Yes-all Yes-some No Don't know
6. Do you receive copies of your REAA school board minutes?
   Yes-all Yes-some No Don't know
7. Does your REAA have a written policy concerning the functions and duties of your CSC?
8. Does your CSC serve as an advisory committee for any of these programs?

JOM	Yes	No	Don't know
Indian Education	Yes	No	Don't know
Title I	Yes	No	Don't know
Other _____	Yes		

9. Has your CSC made decisions concerning any of the following?

Use of school buildings/equipment	Yes	No	Don't know
The school day schedule	Yes	No	Don't know
Types of courses taught	Yes	No	Don't know
The school calendar	Yes	No	Don't know
School construction	Yes	No	Don't know
Hiring and firing janitors/aides	Yes	No	Don't know
Evaluation of staff members	Yes	No	Don't know
Transfer of teachers	Yes	No	Don't know
Preparing budgets for your school	Yes	No	Don't know
Student discipline	Yes	No	Don't know
Other _____	Yes		

10. Who do you see as having the greatest influence in the following decisions for your school - your REAA school board, your CSC, the school administration?

Use of school buildings/equipment	REAA	CSC	School Administration
The school day schedule	REAA	CSC	School Administration
Types of courses taught	REAA	CSC	School Administration
The school calendar	REAA	CSC	School Administration
School construction	REAA	CSC	School Administration
Hiring and firing janitors/aides	REAA	CSC	School Administration
Evaluation of staff members	REAA	CSC	School Administration
Transfer of teachers	REAA	CSC	School Administration
Preparing budgets for your school	REAA	CSC	School Administration
Student discipline	REAA	CSC	School Administration
Other _____	REAA	CSC	School Administration

11. Do you feel your CSC has enough opportunity to influence educational decisions made about your local schools? Yes No Don't know
12. Is there a need for your CSC? Yes No Don't know
    Please explain.

Susan M. Horton
P.O. Box 7721
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

March 24, 1977

Dear Community School Committee Members,

I am conducting a survey of the Community School Committee, and hope your committee as a group can respond to the enclosed questionnaire. If not, perhaps the chairman or a Committee member can fill it out.

You are in a very unique position in the new REAA school districts, but very little is known about how the Community School Committees are functioning throughout rural Alaska. There are many people who are interested in your views, and I hope this survey will help to increase their understanding of your role in Alaska education.

The data collected will not be reported in such a manner that individual Community School Committees can be identified. I hope you will feel free to add comments or suggestions. I plan to share the results with the REAA school boards, the Department of Education, Center for Northern Educational Research and others who are interested in the improvement of the REAA.

It would be a great help if you could fill this survey out as soon as possible and mail it back in the enclosed envelope. Copies of this survey have been sent to your REAA school board and the superintendent of your district so that they are aware of your participation in this project.

I would sincerely like to thank you for your cooperation and time.

Yours truly,

Susan M. Horton

Notes

1. Sources used were: Alaska State-Operated School System Handbook; The Alaska Unorganized Borough School District Handbook; A Manual for Alaska School Boards; Southeast Island Policy Manual.

EVALUATION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN ONE REAA

Margo Zuelow

Definition of and Rationale for the Task

Looking in-depth at the implementation of the new secondary schools in one district allows educators to take a close look at specific problems. It also provides a model for providing information to decision makers in other districts.

Methodology of the Study

In this study community school committee members, staff, and students in the Iditarod Area School District (IASD), REAA No. 11, were interviewed (see map, Figure 1). This district was the first to establish secondary schools in most of its villages. (The villages of Nikolai and Shageluk chose not to establish a local high school pursuant to Alaska State Department of Education Rules and Regulations 4 AAC 05.050.)

The superintendent made initial plans in September 1976, to have the district's long-range curriculum plan formally evaluated during the 1976-77 school year. An evaluation proposal calling for gathering opinions of students, teachers, and community school committee members concerning the plan was drafted by this researcher. The evaluation plan was presented to the IASD faculty at an in-service workshop in Anchorage, Alaska, during the week of February 21, 1977. The interviews took place during a two-week period from the 14th through the 25th of March, 1977.

In addition to the evaluation, a literature review and historical search were done. Two concepts, the idea of change and of geographical isolation, are central to the study. Due to space limitations, only the evaluation will be discussed in this article.

Gathering the Data

A structured interview technique was chosen to gather the opinions of the subjects. The community school committee members represented the parents and other community members. They, as well as teachers and students, were interviewed. Since the numbers were small, all the community school committee members, teachers, and students in the village at the time were interviewed. A total of 27 community school committee members, 21 staff, and 63 students in eight villages were interviewed. The responses to interview questions have been summarized in narrative form. (A more detailed summary, including tables, may be obtained from the author.)

Local Background

During the 1976-77 academic year, five new small secondary education programs were started in the Iditarod Area School District, Regional Educational Attendance Area #11. New programs were begun in the villages of Grayling, Anvik, Takotna, Telida and Lime Village. One village high school program that had existed prior to this time was continued. Another village extended its program from grades 9-10 to 9-12. The secondary student population ranged from 2 to 52 students in each of the seven communities. The largest secondary school in the district, McGrath, has four secondary teachers.

Regulation 4 AAC 05.070 of the Alaska State Department of Education requires of the new REAAs that:

> Subsequent to the close of each school year for which an educational plan must be developed under (a) of this section but no later than the governing body's first meeting in September, the chief school administrator shall prepare and submit to the governing body of the school district an evaluation of each new school operated by the district.
>
> The chief school administrator of a district shall insure maximum ongoing local community participation in the development and preparation of the educational plans and evaluation of the plans required in this section.

To fulfill these obligations, community school committee members, staff, and students of the IASD were interviewed.

Description of REAA No. 11

The Iditarod Area School District covers 41,500 square miles of interior Alaska. McGrath, on the Kuskokwim River, with a population of 300, is the district headquarters. This is an old gold mining site, which still has a large non-Native population. Other villages on the Kuskokwim are Nikolai and Telida, both Athabascan Indian villages of one hundred or fewer people. The community of Lime Village is also an Athabascan village located south of McGrath on a tributary of the Kuskokwim. Takotna is a largely non-Native, former gold mining community on Takotna Mountain west of McGrath. The four Yukon River villages of Holy Cross, Anvik, Grayling, and Shageluk are all Athabascan villages of one to three hundred people each. Traditional subsistence living is practiced by some Indian members of each community, which includes hunting (moose, caribou, bear, goats, and sheep), fishing (seasonal runs of salmon and other fish), and gathering (wild berries and other edible plants). A limited number of cash income jobs now exist in all

villages with principal employers being the school, Native corporations, the State of Alaska (policeman, airstrip maintenance man, etc.), United States Public Health Service (village medical aide), and the corporation which owns the local store or trading post. Some small private stores and other businesses such as a pool hall or movie concession exist.

Most villagers speak English except in Lime Village, Nikolai, and Telida, where the population is mixed in their ability to speak the Native language and English. An interpreter was needed while interviewing the community school committee members in Lime Village. Some homes are made of logs with homemade furniture and wood-burning stoves. Others are constructed of sawed lumber with furniture and appliances from a mail order catalogue. All combinations of these two conditions exist.

The REAA Educational Plan

The Board, acting to meet the intent of the Tobeluk Decree,[1] took steps to initiate partial or full local secondary programs in those communities that requested such programs in the fall of 1976. The district developed plans so that the basic academic instructional program in each community would be taught by certificated teachers. The district also planned to maintain a pupil-classroom teacher ratio of no larger than 15 to 1 in each new secondary or combined elementary and secondary school. Correspondence courses were used to augment the basic secondary program in each community. Vocational education courses were made available to all students beginning in the second quarter of the school year, with instructional delivery being accomplished through the use of automated (slides and tapes) programmed teaching materials.

The superintendent of the Iditarod Area School District recommended to the IASD Board that the district create an ongoing, long-range development plan for a comprehensive secondary education program that would offer students a choice between five curriculum emphasis areas or major educational alternatives regardless of which school a student attended in the district.

Emphasis Area 1: Program designed to prepare the student for successful life in his/her home community and region upon graduation.

Emphasis Area 2: Program designed to prepare the student for (1) successful entrance into a trade, business school, or community college trade or business program upon graduation, and (2) jobs that may exist in the region that require a limited knowledge of business or trade skills.

Emphasis Area 3: Program designed to prepare the student for successful entrance into a public college or university.

Emphasis Area 4: Program designed to prepare the student for successful entrance into the armed services.

Emphasis Area 5: Program designed to prepare the student for any combination of areas 1-4.

The long-range plan was drafted by IASD administrative staff and consultants in order to help meet Board concerns about the relevancy, effectiveness, and equality of opportunity of schooling provided students served by IASD schools. It was introduced and copies distributed in August and September, 1976, in the seven communities with IASD schools. Each principal-teacher was asked to review the plan with community school committee members, students, and teachers during the school year. Depending upon responses to the plan, the district proposed expanding and implementing the plan by developing required and elective courses for each of the curriculum emphasis areas by no later than during the 1977-78 school year.

Data Analysis

Two major objectives were accomplished during the data collection phase of this study: one was the evaluation of the secondary education programs in the Iditarod Area School District; the other was a test of the interview technique for gathering data in rural Alaska situations.

This was the first information collected in a systematic manner about the operation of these particular schools. The evaluation was "formative" in nature, since as intended, people were still actively involved in the creation of what was to remain a flexible curriculum. This was also the first time the community school committee members were given large amounts of control and decision-making power.

Their overall responses to the interviews indicated that they were making decisions (approving the hiring of teachers). A sense of pride showed in their feeling that "this is our school, it no longer belongs to some agency far away" and in their awareness that they were moving things in a direction they thought appropriate. In some cases there was a reluctance to evaluate "our new program" before it had a chance to prove itself, which indicated an ownership feeling.

The four broad questions asked were: (1) Is the new school program what people expected? (2) What are the advantages and disadvantages of

having a secondary school in the village? (3) What are the problems in implementing the new program? and (4) To what extent were members of the community involved in planning the new program?

From responses to the first question, it was clear that many expected traditional school buildings rather than rented or converted facilities. This is an interesting expectation since most village residents are likely to be aware from past experiences that it takes two construction seasons (summers) to complete any large building, and they had voted in August 1976 to have a secondary program the following month. With this in mind, the comments about the new school buildings may have been more suggestions than expectations. From 40 to 56 percent of the members of each group expected a secondary program similar to the one offered. The rest had not pictured a program much different from the elementary school.

Whether some things were considered advantages or disadvantages was dependent upon the village from which the respondent came. Advantages mentioned by all groups were flexibility in class schedules and the small classes. Having a high school in the village at all was seen as an advantage because so many students had dropped out of, or had refused to attend, boarding school. The expressed disadvantages concerned facilities, equipment, and staff. It would seem that having the students attend school at home was seen as the more emotional concern. The most useful suggestions for making village schools the best possible alternative came from the disadvantages noted.

Questions asked concerning problems in implementing the new program were specific to the curriculum emphasis areas. The most useful emphasis area according to all groups was preparation for business and trade school. Least useful for all groups was preparation for entrance into the armed services. Considering the long history of educators' preference for vocational training for Native students, this is not an unusual finding. Possibly there is lack of knowledge concerning alternatives. It seems clear from the reasons stated that rejection of preparation for college by teachers and parents may be a result of low expectations for Native students.

IASD decision makers (the Board and administration) have used the information obtained from the evaluation to make the following decisions:

1. options in the form of emphasis area choices will be continued;

2. no student will be allowed to take more than two correspondence courses at a time and only above average students may participate;

3. students will travel to schools with specialized facilities, for example, a shop, for short periods of time; and

4. an itinerant curriculum director has been hired who will work with the teachers, community members, and students in each school in an ongoing assessment of needs of individual students, development of programs for them, and procurement of materials and supplies needed by the village schools to implement teaching the emphasis areas.

In relation to the second objective, it was found that the interview technique as used in this evaluation was not efficient in terms of time or money. All members, rather than a sample of each group (CSC members, students, and staff), were interviewed if they were in the village at the time. This took a great deal of time as well as physical and emotional energy by both interviewers and subjects. The cost of flying to each village was certainly much greater than sending a questionnaire through the mail. The flexibility of method, richness and reliability of the data, however, outweigh the cost factors in this particular study. This researcher highly recommends the technique to districts planning evaluation studies.

Recommendations

Two major recommendations are being made by the author as a result of this study. They are presented here as general recommendations with specific suggestions for implementation. Further narrative detail is available upon request from the author.

Recommendation 1: One geographically isolated school district be established as an experimental or laboratory district for the study of change.

Specific Suggestion 1: The experimental district's curriculum and staff members need to complement the culture and environment of the area.

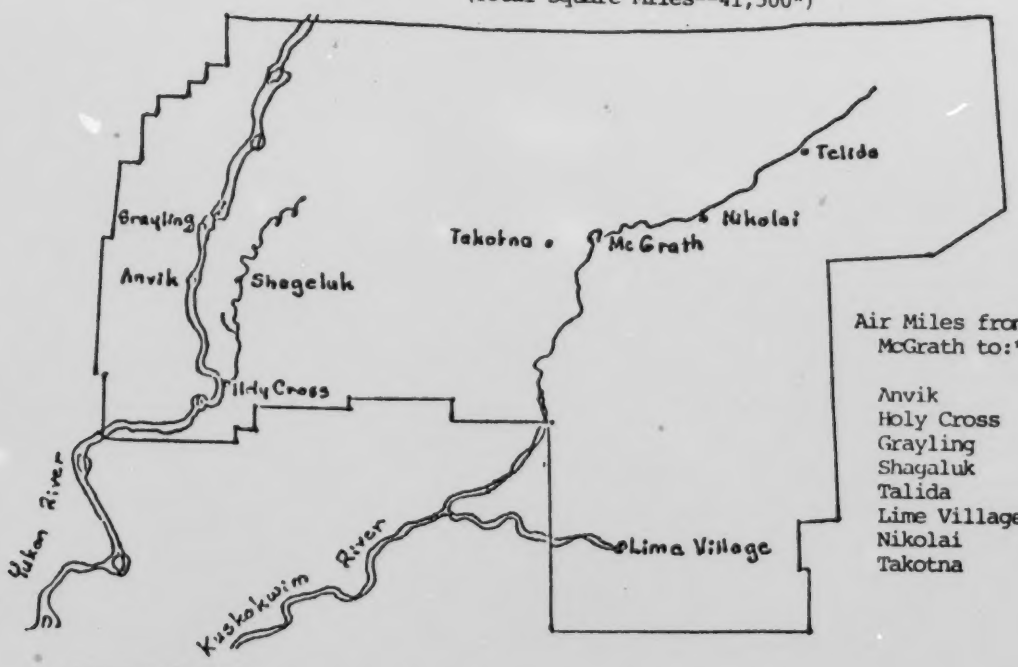
Specific Suggestion 2: [The process needs to] facilitate community involvement in the educational plans of the district.

Specific Suggestion 3: [The process needs to] gain the support of the governmental units capable of making program changes available.

Specific Suggestion 4: A central support service needs to be available to all districts to act as a clearing house and dissemination center for exemplary program ideas and agency referral.

Recommendation 2: The process used to create change in the experimental district should be the subject of evaluation research.

Figure 1. -Iditarod Area School District
(Total Square Miles--41,500*)



Air Miles from McGrath to:**

Anvik	148
Holy Cross	144
Grayling	144
Shagaluk	126
Talida	78
Lime Village	111
Nikolai	42
Takotna	15

*Square mile figure provided by Terry Chase, Asst. Superintendent, Iditarod Area School District

**Air mileage figures provided by Hub Air Service, McGrath, Alaska.

FINANCING THE REAAs

E. Dean Coon

Provisions for continued state support of the operating expenses of schools in the Unorganized Borough were specified in Senate Bill 35. REAAs would qualify for basic need funds under the formula used in the Public School Foundation Program (PSFP). REAAs also would receive from the State specified amounts per pupil in lieu of local tax revenues. The statutory citation (1975):

> Sec. 14.08.121 FUNDING. (a) The legislature shall fund the operational costs of the regional educational attendance area schools in the following manner:
>
> (1) the amount of basic need as defined in AS 14.17.021(b) and
>
> (2) an additional amount equal to the average local tax contributions per pupil in average daily membership (ADM) for school operating costs in the city and borough school districts in the prior fiscal year.
>
> (b) Funds for the operation of the regional educational attendance area schools shall be appropriated annually to the Department of Education for distribution to the regional school boards in the manner prescribed in AS 14.17.160 - 14.17.180.

There were several advantages in using the PSFP formula to determine the major amount of state aid to be provided to REAAs. Local and state education administrators were familiar with the formula and how it worked. It was possible, with a fair degree of accuracy, to estimate the amount of PSFP revenues that a REAA would receive in a future year, and from state summary figures, to estimate the amount of the state appropriation necessary to fully fund basic need in each REAA. Use of the existing PSFP eliminated the need to devise a new method of distributing state funds. For those who wanted "basic need" to continue to be a sum of money, rather than be defined as the basic educational need of a local education agency, it offered the advantage of once again deferring the development of a clarified definition of basic need.

The disadvantages included the assumption that REAA financial requirements were more like those of the city and borough districts than not. Specialized local needs of the new REAAs would not be a factor used to determine the basic need amount; rather, the statutory specifications of the PSFP formula would determine how much state aid would be provided. REAAs would suffer from any inadequacies of the PSFP; the two elements most likely to affect them would be (1) instructional unit allotments and (2) funding of very small attendance centers.

The manner devised to provide funds in lieu of local tax revenues, which of course were non-existent in REAAs, was intended to be equitable in terms

of the efforts of city and borough school districts, and to provide what was hoped would be adequate supplementary funds for discretionary use by the REAAs. It was one way to permit REAA revenues beyond basic need to be nearly comparable on a per student basis to the local revenues of city and borough districts.

It is worth noting that decisions by city and borough school boards (and city councils and borough assemblies) regarding the amount of local revenue to be used for school operating expenses is the factor which determines the amount of state aid per student that REAAs receive beyond basic need payments. Thus, REAA boards have no control over the amount to be obtained from the in-lieu-of local tax source, but do control how it is to be spent.

Basic need revenues under the PSFP for REAAs in 1976-77, their first year of operation, totaled $35,908,570. With a final ADM of 10,519 this amounted to an average of $3,414 per ADM. In-lieu-of local revenue support totaled $6,427,109, or $611 per student. State financial support to the REAAs for PSFP basic need and in-lieu-of local support totaled $42,335,679 or an average of $4,025 per student in ADM. Table 1 lists basic need and in-lieu-of local support revenue for each REAA for 1976-77.[1]

Table 1

Regional Educational Attendance Areas
Revenues from Basic Need and In-Lieu of Local Support
Fiscal Year 1976-77

REAA	Basic Need	Equiv. of Local Support $611.00/ADM	Final Computation of Entitlement	Per ADM
Adak	$1,458,204	$359,268	$1,817,472	$3,091
Alaska Gateway	1,335,024	258,453	1,593,477	3,767
Aleutian	1,027,371	134,420	1,161,791	5,281
Annette Island	892,500	243,178	1,135,678	2,853
Bering Strait	1,391,922	186,966	1,578,888	5,160
Chatham	626,405	95,927	722,332	4,601
Chugach	301,880	39,104	340,984	5,329
Copper River	1,955,000	427,089	2,382,089	3,408
Delta/Greely	1,780,032	480,246	2,260,278	2,876
Iditarod Area	1,404,400	169,247	1,573,647	5,681
Kuspuk	1,579,950	219,960	1,799,910	5,000
Lake & Peninsula	1,756,473	221,182	1,977,655	5,463
Lower Kuskokwim	3,856,125	866,398	4,722,523	3,330
Lower Yukon	2,457,000	430,144	2,887,144	4,101
Northwest Arctic	4,213,200	805,298	5,018,498	3,808
Pribilof	729,102	110,591	839,693	4,639
Southeast Island	1,233,750	242,567	1,476,317	3,719
Southwest	2,187,306	323,830	2,511,136	4,738
Upper Railbelt	1,404,396	217,516	1,621,912	4,556
Yukon Flats	1,299,070	179,023	1,478,093	5,045
Yukon Koyukuk	3,019,460	416,702	3,436,162	5,038
Totals	$35,908,570	$6,427,109	$42,335,679	

The requirement of $42,335,679 exceeded earlier estimates and the State Department of Education sought and obtained a supplemental appropriation for Fiscal Year 1977 totaling $3,855,470. Of this supplemental, $2,638,000 was for PSFP basic need payments to REAAs; the balance of $1,217,470 was for payments in lieu of local taxes.

Federal funds, and other state funds, can be obtained for operating expenses by REAAs which qualify, in the same manner that such funds are available to city and borough districts. Most of these funds are categorical in nature, since they are to be used for specific purposes, and in every case to supplement the regular program. The major sources of these categorical funds and their use are as follows:

State--Pupil transportation
Bilingual education
Community schools

Federal--Educationally disadvantaged (ESEA, Title I)
Handicapped children (ESEA, Title VI)
Bilingual education (ESEA, Title VII)
Child nutrition (National School Lunch Act)
Indian Education Act
Ethnic Heritage (ESEA, Title IX)
Johnson O'Malley

Several of these categorical programs are competitive, and the success of a REAA in obtaining those funds depends upon the "grantsmanship" of individual REAAs. Independently, the 21 REAAs had to compete with all city and borough districts for the competitive grants; in the prior Fiscal Year of 1975-76, the Alaska Unorganized Borough School District (AUBSD) was the applicant for all schools in the Unorganized Borough. It will be interesting to find out how the 21 REAAs compare with the AUBSD in obtaining these categorical funds; this information will not be available until FY'77 audits are compiled.

Federal impact funds provided to Alaska under authority of Public Law 81-874 require a more extended explanation, partly because of the substantial amount involved, and partly because of the circumstances under which they have been applied for and disbursed within Alaska. These funds are payments in lieu of taxes for school districts which have students who live on tax exempt federal lands within the districts.

Until 1976-77 Alaska qualified for a preferential rate of P.L. 874 funds--100% above normal rates--for students outside city and borough districts. This preferential rate is being discontinued over a five-year period following a

new determination by the U.S. Commissioner of Education on Alaska's need for the special rate. Also, until the 1977-78 school year, the State of Alaska, represented by the Department of Education, was the P.L. 874 applicant, and in turn received the P.L. 874 funds which then became a part of the "state" resources. The P.L. 874 funds became a part of the general fund appropriation to support the Alaska State-Operated School System, and later the Alaska Unorganized Borough School District, and in 1976-77, a part of the PSFP basic need and in-lieu-of local tax payment made by the state to support REAAs. Beginning in 1977-78, the individual REAAs will become applicants for their own P.L. 874 funds, although the state will remain as the applicant for the military on-base schools.

During 1975-76 the Department of Education received $25,960,000 of P.L. 874 funds for schools in the Unorganized Borough and estimated a like amount for 1976-77 for REAAs.[2]

The change in P.L. 874 applicant from the Department of Education to individual REAAs required a change in the statute regarding funding. Without that change the REAAs would have been in a position to receive P.L. 874 funds in addition to state funding for basic need and in-lieu-of local revenue payments. The amended statute (with 1977 additions underlined):

> Sec. 14.08.121. Funding. (a) The legislature shall fund the operational costs of the regional educational attendance area schools in the following manner:
>
> (1) the amount of basic need as defined in AS 14.17.021 (b), reduced by deducting, to the maximum extent permitted under Sec. 5(d) (2) of P.L. 81-874, as amended, (20 U.S.C. 240(d) and the regulations adopted under it (45 C.F.R. 115.60-115.66), the amount of the regional educational attendance area's entitlement to federal financial assistance under P.L. 81-874, as amended, (20 U.S.C. 236-244) for the prior fiscal year; ....

With P.L. 874 income "deducted" from state aid payments, some REAAs may experience cash flow problems in 1977-78, and in future years. For federal entitlements for a particular year do not always equal federal payments; thus, income budgeted from P.L. 874 may not be received by the REAA when needed. The state may have to advance funds to REAAs to cover such temporary deficits, or the REAAs may have to borrow operating funds from time to time.

Senate Bill 35 provided that the ownership of the land and buildings used by REAAs would be retained by the state, and that construction, repair, and improvement of schools would be the responsibility of the state. REAAs

which wish to construct, repair or improve school buildings must apply to the state for funds to do so. The REAA requests are prioritized by the Department of Education which then seeks funding for the selected projects through state bond issues (for construction) and through legislative appropriation (for repair and improvement). As many as three years could pass from the time a REAA requested funds for construction until the funds became available. In this respect, the fiscally dependent REAAs' needs for buildings are treated in the same manner as state agencies'.

In Fiscal Year 1976-77, voters at a statewide election approved a bond issue which provided more than $30,000,000 for construction of secondary schools in various REAAs. This bond issue was a part of the settlement of the Hootch vs. the Alaska State-Operated School System case. Another bond issue for similar purposes is being developed now and will be submitted to voters at the Fall 1978 general election.

Local Financial Concerns of REAAs

Even as the REAAs began their first year of operation with full state support, numerous concerns about financing were expressed. These concerns were systematically gathered at four regional workshops conducted in October and November 1976 as a part of the Alaska School Finance Study. The major concerns expressed, grouped by problem area, are listed below.

1. Public School Foundation Program. While few wished to change the basic funding method, concern was expressed about the ability of the formula to provide sufficient funds to meet operating costs, especially those of small attendance centers. The validity, accuracy, and amounts of instructional unit allotments (regional cost differentials) were questioned. The ability of "basic need" dollars to meet the REAAs' "basic program need" was of great concern.

2. School construction. The amount of funds available for new construction, as well as the manner in which it is provided, received extensive criticism. Even as the FY'78 building program got underway, REAAs expressed additional concern about the proportion of bond issue building funds being retained by the supervising state agencies for administrative purposes.

3. Equity. REAAs, with no local source of revenue, have limited ability to operate discretionary programs beyond what is possible with the amount in lieu of local taxes available to each. The possibility that legislation might be enacted to tax property in REAAs was of concern.

4. Operation and maintenance of school facilities. Extreme operational costs often result from inheriting substandard or poorly designed facilities.

Costs of operating facilities are unpredictable, and in some cases were expected to consume as much as one-third of the operating budget. Inherited utility contracts was singled out as an item of great concern.

5. Other financial concerns. State and federal categorical programs were items of much concern, partly because obtaining some of these funds depends upon the grant writing ability of the REAA. High costs of travel and meeting expenses for school boards and superintendents were expected to cause problems. Inadequate funding for school food service programs was also identified as a major concern. The acceptance and operation of former BIA schools was of concern because of the possibility that current funding methods might not be adequate to provide funds necessary to operate the schools. Costs of teacher housing was a problem in some REAAs.

A more detailed list of financial concerns of REAAs, along with suggested solutions, is contained in a report entitled Summary of Findings Alaska School Finance Study Regional Workshops October-November 1976, published in February 1977.

Responses to REAA Financial Needs

Two important legislative changes made in the Public School Foundation Program in 1977 responded to the financial concern of the REAAs. One recognized the plight of the very small attendance centers and provided for an increased minimum of instructional units. The second change modified the instructional unit allotments (regional cost differentials) to be more in line with the cost of doing business in rural and isolated areas of the state.

Table 2 shows a comparison of allowable instructional units in 1976-77 and 1977-78. The effect of these changes is to provide a larger minimum basic need amount for the very small school. The change is especially supportive of new small secondary school programs.

Table 2

Comparison of Allowable Instructional Units

FY'77 Elementary and Secondary Schools		FY'78 Elementary and Secondary Schools	
ADM	Inst. Units	ADM	Inst. Units
under 10	1	-	-
10 - 20	2	under 20	2
21 - 32	3	20 - 32	3
33 - 46	4	33 - 46	4
- - - -*		- - - -*	
Combined Elementary and Secondary Schools		**Combined Elementary and Secondary Schools**	
Not available		under 12	3
		12 - 20	4
		21 - 32	5

*Higher ADM's omitted from this table

Changes in the instructional unit allotments (regional cost differentials: a percentage method of increasing the value of the base instructional unit value for those REAAs which qualify) were far reaching, and of course applied to city and borough districts too. The manner in which the new allotments were devised is an interesting study in political action, and the analysis in Table 3 compares the various proposals for change with the FY'77 rates. The final new rate established for FY'78 is shown in column 5.

Table 3

Analysis of Instructional Unit Allotment Proposals
for Regional Education Attendance Areas
February - May 1977

Regional Education Attendance Area	(1) Instructional Unit Allotments for 1976-77	(2) H.B. 212 Proposal Allotments (February 14)	(3) Interregional Cost Differential Study Index (February 16)	(4) S.B. 225 Allotments (March 8)	(5) Senate CS for CS for H.B. 212 (May 19)
Northwest Arctic	140.44	192.63	159.6	150.	155.
Bering Strait	132.56	169.66	162.9	150.	155.
Lower Yukon	136.50	181.00	168.8	150.	155.
Lower Kuskokwim	136.50	181.00	155.0	150.	155.
Kuspuk	140.44	192.63	-----	150.	155.
Southwest Region	132.56	169.66	155.4	150.	155.
Lake and Peninsula	132.56	169.66	-----	150.	155.
Aleutian Chain	132.56	169.66	-----	145.	150.
Pribilof Islands	132.56	169.66	-----	135.	150.
Adak	132.56	169.66	-----	135.	140.
Iditarod	140.44	192.63	171.1	150.	155.
Yukon-Koyukuk	140.44	192.63	159.7	150.	155.
Yukon Flats	140.44	192.63	144.9	145.	155.
Upper Railbelt	133.75	167.50	-----	112.	120.
Delta/Greely	111.25	122.50	-----	112.	120.
Alaska Gateway	111.25	122.50	-----	112.	120.
Copper River	115.00	130.00	-----	115.	115.
Chatham	107.50	115.00	-----	108.	108.
Southeast Islands	105.00	101.875	101.0	104.	104.
Annette Island	105.00	101.875	-----	104.	104.
Chugach	115.00	130.00	-----	120.	120.

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October 25, 1977

House Bill 212, introduced February 14, 1977, proposed new and much higher instructional unit allotments for all but two REAAs. The proposed new maximum was set at 192.63% of the base instructional unit value (the old maximum was 140.44 which included a 5% isolation factor).

Shortly thereafter, the report entitled Alaska Interregional Cost Differentials was completed. Included in this report were new cost of living figures for many areas of the state, including nine of the 21 REAAs. The information from this report, plus other information, was used by the Department of Education in devising the Administration's bill, introduced March 8 as Senate Bill 225. SB 225 did not advance, as the legislators chose to utilize HB 212, modifying it to specify instructional unit allotments for 16 of the 21 REAAs slightly higher than those suggested by the Department of Education.

The effect of the instructional unit allotment changes on basic need for REAAs can be examined by comparing actual FY'77 figures with what they might have been if the new allotments had been in effect. The comparisons, shown below in Table 4 on an ADM basis, do not include the effect of changes in methods of calculating the number of instructional units, which are constant for this comparison. An additional $3,338,430 would have been required for the REAAs if the new instructional unit allotments had been used in FY'77.

Table 4

Comparison of Public School Foundation Program Revenues
Per ADM for REAAs, FY'77, and FY'78 Using
FY'78 Instructional Unit Allotments

	Revenue Per ADM for FY'77		
REAA	Actual	Amount if FY'78 Allotment Rates Used	Increase (Decrease)*
Adak	$3091	$3230	$139
Alaska Gateway	3767	4015	248
Aleutian	5281	5895	614
Annette Island	2853	2832	(20)*
Bering Strait	5160	5929	769
Chatham	4601	4566	(35)*
Chugach	5329	5298	(31)*
Copper River	3408	3408	--
Delta/Greely	2876	3057	181
Iditarod Area	5681	6206	525
Kuspuk	5000	5454	454
Lake & Peninsula	5463	6284	821
Lower Kuskokwim	3330	3698	368
Lower Yukon	4101	4574	473
Northwest Arctic	3808	4319	511
Pribilof	4639	5169	530
Southeast Island	3719	3689	(30)*
Southwest	4738	5436	698
Alaska Central Railbelt	4556	4150	(406)*
Yukon Flats	5045	5504	495
Yukon Koyukuk	5038	5497	459
State Average			$317

*The decreases shown in this example would not be likely to occur due to the increase of the value of the instructional unit from $25,000 for FY'77 to $27,500 for FY'78.

Prior to and early in FY'77 several REAAs expressed concern about the amount of funds to be available for operating expenses. At least two REAAs, perhaps more, whose service areas were similar to the Alaska Unorganized Borough School District's (AUBSD) service areas, had expected to receive their FY'76 balances from AUBSD. Others were concerned with having sufficient funds to conduct school programs of equal or better quality or cost to those conducted in FY'76 by AUBSD. But the manner in which AUBSD maintained its accounting records made it difficult to make such comparisons for all regions. Preparing a balanced budget for the first year of operation was one of the biggest challenges faced by the new REAAs.

Two specific cases are illustrative of the budgeting problems faced by many REAAs. Both were resolved, to some extent, but only after much discussion and investigation by the parties and agencies involved.

Bering Strait REAA reported severe budget problems during its first year of operation. Revenue anticipated was not adequate to cover the desired budget.

A request for additional state funding support was made to the Department of Education, but it was not acted upon until late in the fiscal year. During the year the REAA made a number of significant cuts in its program, including reduction of the number of board meetings, deferral of the planned mid-year start of high school at Unalakleet, and termination of staff needed for maintenance of facilities.

In May 1977 the Legislature made a supplemental appropriation of $400,000 for the Bering Strait REAA, but this was reduced to $180,000 by the Governor. The resulting shortfall in revenues has resulted in litigation against the REAA by organizations representing groups of employees.

The financial picture for this REAA is much better for FY'78. Increases by the Legislature of the instructional unit allotment (previously described in this chapter) and of the value of the instructional unit are providing an additional $616,000 for the current year.

The other case involved the Northwest Arctic REAA, headquartered at Kotzebue. The circumstances there involved the addition of two former Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools, and partial resolution was possible through the assistance of the BIA.

Northwest Arctic budget requirements also exceeded the estimated resources available, and additional funds were requested from the state; none were forthcoming. At the same time, discussions with the BIA resulted in assistance from that agency for the former BIA schools. This help was in

the form of funds for teacher aides, school lunches, and fuel, supplies, and materials already on order or on site.

Bering Strait and Northwest Arctic, as well as other eligible REAAs, did receive additional state funds to help pay a portion of Alaska Village Electric Cooperative utility bills. This was made possible through passage of House Bill 150, which provided a supplemental appropriation of $615,000 to assist REAAs and other districts which qualified.

Other Financial Considerations

Several other events and circumstances affected the REAAs' financial status in FY'77 or will affect it in the future. These include the question of utility costs, transition of BIA schools, federal programs and intervention, construction of buildings, and the possibility of a property tax in the Unorganized Borough. These events and circumstances are listed here without extensive discussion, since the extent of impact upon the REAAs individually and collectively deserve an examination which is beyond the scope of this paper.

1. Utility costs. The primary problem here concerns the commitments made by AUBSD (formerly ASOSS) to Alaska Village Electric Cooperative (AVEC). AVEC required such commitments in order to obtain low interest long term loans. These AUBSD commitments have been forced upon the REAAs, which causes the REAAs to subsidize other local users of electricity. The Alaska Public Utilities Commission is just completing a rate survey, and will soon establish more equitable rates for three classes of users in the villages.

2. The transition of BIA schools. The financial considerations involved with the transfer of BIA schools is of great concern to the seven REAAs with such schools. At the moment, individual REAAs are free to negotiate with the BIA, since policy discussions between the state and BIA are stalled (see an extensive discussion of this matter in the chapter in this report entitled "Progress on the Transfer of BIA Schools Since the Passage of SB 35").

3. Federal programs and intervention. Perhaps the most controversial action in this regard has been the threat by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) to withhold federal funds due to non-compliance by certain REAAs with federal bilingual remedies. The original finding of non-compliance was made by OCR against the AUBSD; OCR then "transferred" the non-compliance to several REAAs. This matter is far from resolved, but it appears no federal funds have been withheld.

4. Construction of buildings. Approval in the fall of 1976 of a State Bond

Issue for rural school construction provided yet another challenge to many of the new REAAs. This required many local planning meetings as well as other meetings and discussions with the supervising state agencies, architects, and builders. As these new buildings go into use, there is concern that the operation and maintenance costs may take a disproportionate share of the REAAs' operating revenues.

5. Possibility of a property tax. The possibility continues to grow that a property tax will be levied on real property in the Unorganized Borough. House Bill 202, which would require this, was introduced in the spring of 1977, and has been the subject of hearings in several communities. The bill is seen by some as a means to force areas to organize municipal or borough governments. If enacted, along with other statutory modifications, it could mean that REAAs could lose the state in-lieu-of local tax payments for education. It could also mean that REAAs could be required to provide the required local share of basic need under the Public School Foundation Program.

Conclusion

This examination of the financing of REAAs in their first year of operation has only partially answered the question of whether the resources available to REAAs were adequate to support the programs desired by local REAA boards. The discretion of local boards was certainly controlled by the amount of funds available, and it will be in future years given continuation of the current funding method. Any answer to the adequacy of funding would require an intensive examination of the quality and cost of local programs. With the possibility of substantial state revenues available for education in the future, REAAs might consider documenting the costs of necessary local programs and seeking funds for them rather than having their programs controlled by the set amounts of revenues provided under current funding schemes. If the students of rural Alaska are to be afforded an opportunity to education equal to those students in other districts, the manner of financial support is a concern that deserves continuing attention.

Notes

1. State Department of Education, Education in Alaska 1976-1977--A Report to the People (Juneau: Department of Education, October, 1977), p. 38.

2. State of Alaska, The Legislature, Free Conference Committee Report Fiscal Year 1978, Operating and Capital Budget (Juneau: Office of Legislative Affairs), p. 39.

3. State Department of Education, Compiled School Laws of Alaska (revised), 1976 and 1977: A.S. Ch. 17, Art. 1, Sec.14.17.031 and Sec. 14.17.041 (Juneau: Department of Education, 1976, 1977).

4. Sources: Alaska Statutes; Michael Scott, Alaska Interregional Cost Differentials; and referenced House Bills and Senate Bills (1977 Session).

SB 35 AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

Patrick K. Poland

The transfer of the major operational responsibilities for rural Alaska's schools from the State of Alaska (Alaska Unorganized Borough School District) to regional school districts (Regional Educational Attendance Areas) with locally elected school boards was accomplished by Ch 124, Session Laws of Alaska, 1975 (popularly referred to as Senate Bill 35).

To a great extent, the ultimate impact of Senate Bill 35 is just beginning to be realized. However, there are already several definite implications for municipal government that have arisen from the implementation of Senate Bill 35. The purpose of this discussion is to underscore these implications as they relate to the development of municipal government in the Unorganized Borough. For purposes of this discussion, municipalities consist of boroughs and first-class cities; that is, municipalities having the education function.

Regional Identification

While rural Alaska's initial encounter with the concept of regionalism came about with passage of Public Law 92-746, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), there is no doubt that Senate Bill 35 went far beyond the implications of the ANCSA in terms of developing regional identification. In the view of the Department of Community and Regional Affairs this was a positive step towards developing regional government in the Unorganized Borough. Prior to the passage and implementation of this particular act there were no real tests of the regional concept of service delivery taking place in the Unorganized Borough;[1] and while there were many advocates of this particular mechanism of service delivery, it remained, by and large, untested. However, with the mandate of regionalization created by Senate Bill 35, rural residents have, in a sense, been forced to test the concepts of regionalism in Alaska's vast Unorganized Borough.

Surprisingly, there seemed little if any real resistance to the idea of regional school districts. On the contrary, most rural residents seemed eager to embrace the concept. Much of this was undoubtedly due to the dissatisfaction many rural residents felt with the former State-Operated School System. Perhaps the strongest demonstration of this desire to participate in a regional approach to service delivery was the change in municipal status executed by the City of Selawik. In that particular instance, the City of Selawik, formerly a city of the first class in the Unorganized Borough and therefore having school responsibilities, petitioned the Local Boundary Commission[2] and convinced them of the need for the city to be dissolved and "reincorporated" as a second class city so that it might become a part of the particular Regional Educational Attendance Area (Northwest Arctic). Among

the arguments presented in support of Selawik's reclassification was a strong statement by residents concerning their desire to be a part of the Regional Educational Attendance Area and to receive benefits they perceived as being available only to constituents of the REAA.

The Department of Community and Regional Affairs, noting the relatively warm embrace being given regionalization by Unorganized Borough residents, early in 1976 initiated a study of the acceptability of general purpose regional governments in the Unorganized Borough. That study,[3] which consumed some six months, came to a number of conclusions, the most important of which appears to be the fact that rural residents are still wary of any form of government that has the authority to levy and collect taxes. Additionally, many residents expressed concern about moving too fast; while they embraced the idea of regional school districts, they felt that the concept required the test of time before jumping to yet a new form of government. Nevertheless, the department has had inquiries from several regions (most notably the Fort Yukon, Bethel, Glennallen, and Valdez regions) concerning possible borough incorporation. To date, none of those discussions has evolved into an actual petition for borough incorporation, although it does appear that many areas are getting close to taking that step. There is no doubt that formal consideration by these regions of regional government was precipitated by the establishment of REAAs.

An additional development which, to some degree, appears to be an offshoot of the regional approach fostered by Senate Bill 35, was the passage of Ch 84 SLA 1977, which established a mechanism for regions of the Unorganized Borough to establish coastal zone management (CZM) service areas for the purpose of CZM planning. Under the provisions of that particular act any Regional Educational Attendance Area, upon determination by the local electorate, may establish itself as a coastal zone management planning district. While the legislation permits consolidation of two or more Regional Educational Attendance Areas into a CZM planning district, it does not allow individual REAAs to be subdivided into smaller districts for the purposes of planning. This is an interesting development and one that seems to further reinforce the concept of delivery services on a regional basis.

Finally, in terms of regionalization, it is interesting to note the provisions of Senate Bill 35 which deal with the boundaries of Regional Educational Attendance Areas. Specifically, the bill provides that:

> As far as practicable, each Regional Educational Attendance Area shall contain an integrated socio-economic, linguistically and culturally homogenous area. In the formation of Regional Educational Attendance Areas, consideration shall be given to the transportation and communication network to facilitate the administration and communication between communities that comprise the area.

Very similar statutory language exists at AS 29.18.030, which is the statutory provision establishing standards for borough incorporation. The similarity of the standards goes a long way towards defining appropriate boundaries for potential regional governments. In fact, to some observers, the boundaries of the newly created Regional Educational Attendance Areas (with some exceptions) generally conform to good borough boundaries. This has been a little alarming to many rural residents, since no small number of them are still concerned that the state is going to "foist" boroughs upon them.

Finance

The second major subject area that has been the topic of much discussion as a result of Senate Bill 35 is that of local government finance. As presently constituted, Regional Educational Attendance Areas, in comparison to municipal school districts, have an advantageous funding schedule. In addition to 100 percent Public School Foundation Program funding, Regional Educational Attendance Areas also receive from the State an amount equal to the average local contribution per pupil in municipal school districts multiplied by the number of students in the Regional Educational Attendance Area. This advantageous funding schedule for REAAs versus municipal districts remains a hindrance rather than an enticement for REAAs to seek organized borough status.

Since most REAAs are property poor (hence, no ability to generate tax revenues), the thought of forming municipal school districts to provide services which are currently provided by Regional Educational Attendance Areas is almost out of the question. For example, the poorest existing borough has about $20,000 worth of taxable property per capita. On the other hand, some of the Regional Educational Attendance Areas could probably expect to have considerably less than $5,000 worth of taxable property per capita. Realistically, it is impossible to provide basic municipal services without adequate funding.

The major exceptions to this discussion, of course, are those areas surrounding "the pipeline." The regions surrounding Fort Yukon, Delta Junction, Glennallen, Copper Center, and Valdez have taxable property per capita values that could easily support borough government.

Partially in response to these obvious funding inequities, the Department of Community and Regional Affairs, as a part of its final conclusions reached in its study of regional government, recommended that a new system of financing regional governments be found. Basically, the system suggested was one that placed a state-wide property tax on all property associated with the exploitation of natural resources and then, in turn, distributed those tax revenues on the basis of population and services being provided by individual boroughs. It was determined that additional study of that particular proposal

would be needed before the feasibility of it could be determined.

Nevertheless, this particular area is still a popular subject among legislators as demonstrated by current House Bill 202 and Senate Bill 35 introduced in the first session of the 1977 Legislative Session. Both those bills would levy real property taxes on developed land in the Unorganized Borough. Hearings on House Bill 202 were held this October (1977) in Fort Yukon, Delta Junction, and Tok.

Finally, one last area of financing that again discriminates between the municipal versus REAA school district is that of school construction. Presently municipal districts must pay for 50 percent of school construction while REAAs contribute no local effort towards construction of new facilities. This is seen as a significant impediment to the development of regional government for the purpose of assuming local control of education, particularly in areas which are "poor" or are marginally deficient in terms of a real property tax base.

Constitutionality

I mention this issue simply because it is one of concern to many involved with municipal government. Because REAAs are not units of local government they cannot be given taxing authority nor can they provide "local government" services.[4] While the legality of the current REAAs has not been challenged on the grounds of Article X, Section 2, of the Constitution, there is reason to believe that if additional REAA-type entities are established they will be challenged and may, on the basis of Article X, Section 2, be declared unconstitutional.

On the other hand, those defending the constitutionality of the REAAs cite Article X, Section 6, of the Constitution which authorizes the Legislature to provide services in the Unorganized Borough ostensibly through the service area mechanism. However, the significant degree of autonomy given REAAs, particularly with respect to their abilities to independently contract and incur debt, makes the argument that REAAs are service areas, and hence an arm of the Legislature, highly suspect.[5]

Summary

In summary, it can be said that formation of the Regional Educational Attendance Areas can be viewed as a positive step towards the formation of regional government in rural Alaska. In particular the newly created service areas have provided a greater amount of local control over a local municipal-type service, maintained and strengthened existing regional identifications, and provided boundaries that will be useful for the establishment of boroughs in the future.

The principal negative aspect of Senate Bill 35 has been the funding formula which maintains a disincentive to formation of municipal governments and fails to properly address the extremely poor tax base of much of rural Alaska.

Ultimately, the passage of Senate Bill 35, if for no reason other than the fact that it has generated discussion and interest, is going to have had a significant effect (probably the most significant since the passage of the 1964 mandatory borough act) towards developing regional government in this state.

Notes

1. Admittedly, certain state and federal agencies have been administering a few programs on a regional basis. However, these agencies have had the benefit of vast government financial and technical resources to assist them. In the opinion of this writer, the availability of these resources makes any comparison between the state/federal regional approach and the REAAs invalid.

2. The Local Boundary Commission is composed of five members and is responsible for reviewing and approving or disapproving all municipal incorporation, dissolution, and boundary change proposals.

3. While a final report was not issued at the end of the study, several comprehensive memorandums summarizing various aspects of the study are available from Community and Regional Affairs. As an additional result of the study, legislation calling for a Local Government Commission to study and make recommendations to the Legislature on all aspects of state/local relations is being introduced by Governor Hammond in the second session of the Tenth State Legislature (January 1978).

4. Alaska Constitution, Article X, Section 2. All local government powers shall be vested in boroughs and cities. The state may delegate taxing powers to organized boroughs and cities only.

5. For further information, the reader may wish to consult David Getches, Law and Alaska Native Education, pp. 32-34.

PROGRESS ON THE TRANSFER OF BIA SCHOOLS SINCE THE PASSAGE OF SB 35

Donald M. Dafoe

It was viewed by some that one of the most significant aspects of SB 35 was the inclusion of Bureau of Indian Affairs schools within the boundaries of the Regional Educational Attendance Areas. This was interpreted to be the final chapter in the history of Alaska's dual (Federal/State) system, anticipating the subsequent transition of the BIA federally operated schools into the Alaska State school system.

This view was further supported by the 1975-76 Annual Report of the Alaska Commissioner of Education. Reference is made to the dual system as follows:

> *...Currently underway are plans to integrate the State's remaining Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools with those under State jurisdiction. Six schools operated by the BIA transferred to the new districts this summer.*
>
> *'What we hope to see is really simple,' said Commissioner of Education Marshall Lind, 'a single system for all the state's youngsters. And it will be a system structured by state law and regulations, and guided by locally elected school boards.'*
>
> *The transfer of the six Bureau of Indian Affairs schools was the first shift of that type to take place in about eight years. BIA schools at Kotzebue, Hooper Bay, Emmonak, Upper Kalskag, Lower Kalskag, and Kiana became a part of the state system. 'And those decisions were made by the people themselves and not by bureaucrats at either the State or Federal level,' Lind said. 'This was the beginning. They got the momentum going, and I am confident that it will continue.'*

While the optimism expressed by the Commissioner is significant and evidences an attitude of receptivity toward transfer by the State, acting on behalf of and in conjunction with the REAAs, the actual situation with regard to unification of the systems does not appear to be as promising as he expressed. A review of information from both the files of the Department of Education and the Bureau of Indian Affairs assembled for a Task Force on the Transfer of BIA schools in early 1977 reveals that there are marked differences in State and Federal attitudes toward final accomplishment of unification or merger of the systems.

The following selected chronological listing of correspondence,

exchanges of proposals, and opinions, provides a synopsis of events from the signing of SB 35 to the status as of August 1977. The listing is not intended to be all-inclusive but rather to be illustrative of both progress and concerns.

March 1975. The Governor signed SB 35, the Act providing for the elimination of the Alaska State-Operated School System and the establishment of 21 Regional Educational Attendance Areas.

June 15, 1975. The Governor signed into law as Chapter 150, SLA 1975, an Act which related to the transfer of federal agency schools and provided that teachers who wished to transfer would be placed on the salary schedule at no less than his/her current salary; that a transferring teacher holding a valid Alaska certificate and having taught two or more years in the Federal school would be placed on tenure; that sick leave accumulated while teaching in Alaska could be transferred; and that credit toward retirement would be allowed on the basis of up to ten years credit on a buy-in arrangement (the same as for any teacher entering from outside Alaska).

January 1976. Draft letter from Chairman, State Board of Education, to Area Director of the BIA for discussion purposes. The letter pointed out that with the creation of the REAAs, qualified voters in villages served by BIA schools are eligible to vote for and serve on REAA boards, citing the example of Kotzebue, where the BIA operated the school, having five seats on the REAA board. The letter then formally requested the transfer of eight schools in locations where the State is operating secondary programs. The letter also noted that the State Board has directed the Department staff to work with the BIA in addressing the problem of transition of the remaining BIA schools to State control.

February 2, 1976. Deputy Area Director's memorandum reported a meeting with the State Board of Education on January 30. The report noted that the Area Director had expressed concern that the commitment to local villages under the self-determination policies and regulations has made school transfer decisions more difficult. He felt that the REAA boards should have a voice in the transfer decisions, and suggested only two schools be transferred at that time. He agreed that REAA boards and BIA employees should be informed on discussions, progress, and plans.

March 19, 1976. Memorandum from Area Director to Commissioner of Indian Affairs. He noted that discussions are being held concerning school transfers and that one of the problem areas is the question of upgrading school facilities to meet State standards and the availability of Federal dollars for such purpose.

March 26, 1976. Letters from Area Director to REAA boards. He noted control of BIA schools within an REAA border hinges upon the board's desire

to assume the responsibility. He suggested that any proposals for assumption of BIA school operations first be discussed with the affected community.

March 26, 1976. Memoranda from the Area Director to the BIA day schools. The Director noted that under the Indian Self-Determination Act it would be possible for the Bureau to contract with Native tribal entities for school operations, but to date no such contracts had been entered into. However, he noted that they would not contract with a REAA, although direct transfers would be possible.

April 7, 1976. Commissioner Lind transmits a proposed Memorandum of Agreement to the Area Director. Essentially the proposal expressed the State's willingness to assume operational authority, where the REAA board has expressed willingness to accept the schools, to assume title to property or a use permit, if the schools are up to State standards, with the BIA agreeing to provide funding of the entire difference between funds received by the State under P.L. 874 and the state funding formula for the particular site on a declining basis over a five-year period. It also requested BIA funding to the extent available to provide upgrading of facilities and new facilities.

April 13, 1976. Letter from Area Director to the Chairperson of the Northwest Arctic REAA acknowledging receipt of the request for Kiana and Kotzebue day schools to be transferred to the district. (This transfer was later effected.)

April 16, 1976. Area Director responded to State proposal, objecting to several points; particularly those related to continued financing for operations and financing of capital improvements. The letter also noted that the BIA felt that perhaps the State proposal put undue pressure on the REAAs to assume responsibility for schools operated by the Bureau and noted that the Bureau was planning to continue operations.

May 1 and May 8, 1976. The Lower Yukon REAA submitted resolutions regarding the transfer of four schools.

November 1976. Yupiktak Bista stated its position on school transfers, citing the Indian Self-Determination Act under which, in their opinion, Native peoples could determine whether they wanted to contract to operate schools and the conflict with apparent authority given to the REAAs to take over schools. They expressed opposition to further transfers, citing the financial instability of the REAAs and the failure of the State to provide sufficient funds; stating that villages should not be asked to vote on transfer until the REAAs had proven themselves as viable educational districts.

November 16, 1976. The Area Director sent letters to all REAA boards asking that any requests for transfers of schools be submitted no later than January 1, 1977, and asking that village concurrence be gained prior to taking board action.

November 22, 1976. The Lower Kuskokwim REAA board adopted a policy of assuming operation of BIA day schools in each village where a district-operated high school program is established. When this action became known the villagers of Toksook became aroused and objected to the policy.

December 1976. The Area Director proposed a Memorandum of Agreement which ignored, and in effect rejected, the State's proposal for continued funding on a declining basis and the question of upgrading or replacing facilities. It did recognize the possibility of supplementing a transferred school's budget to prevent serious loss of programs, on a case-by-case basis, and proposed to proceed with procurement of supplies for the school program, including lunch service and utility contracts for one year. Subsequently, the proposal was amended to a "final offer" of two-year funding for teacher aides, two-year funding of food service, and initial start-up costs for the year of transfer.

January 20, 1977. The Area Director in a letter to the Governor officially terminated the existing agreement between the Bureau and the State in school transfers (the 1968 Overall Plan) on the grounds that it was outmoded and in conflict with the Self-Determination Act and inappropriate under the new REAA school district statute. He indicated willingness to reopen negotiations.

January 21, 1977. Governor Hammond's letter to Interior Secretary Andrus. He referred to the Area Director's action in denying any special assistance to REAAs for schools already transferred because of the State's rejection of the BIA's "final offer," noting the Director's apparent intent to reprogram funds reserved for these six schools to other BIA programs. Requested a hearing to present the State's position.

January 26, 1977. Area Director's letter to Commissioner Lind stating that because of the Indian Self-Determination Act the BIA policy would be to require village concurrence before the Bureau would agree to transfer a school and that he was notifying the REAAs accordingly. (On February 24 the Commissioner responded to the Area Director, agreeing to the concept of village concurrence.)

The Report of the Task Force on Alaska School Transfer

As a result of Governor Hammond's letter to Secretary Andrus, a Task Force was appointed by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. The Task Force Report[1] referred to past efforts toward school transfers, noting that the State is legally obligated to furnish education to all its children, but stating that the Bureau should continue operating schools until a local community wants it to withdraw. Reference is made to the 1968 plan, termed as presently outmoded, and cites the REAA act and the Indian Self-Determination

Act as the framework within which transfers must be considered. It states:

> ...In all instances Native American communities will be advised of their options either to (1) transfer their schools to the Regional Educational Attendance Area, (2) contract with the BIA, or (3) remain under the Federal school system.

A Field Solicitor's opinion included in the reports noted that the Bureau is not legally required to transfer any school or schools upon request of the State, and that schools previously transferred would not have to be accepted back by the Bureau.

Positions stated in the Task Force report included:

1. The Bureau would agree to complete any scheduled funded capital improvements, but schools would be transferred on an "as is, where is" basis

2. ESEA Title I program support could no longer be gained through BIA but could be sought through the Alaska Department of Education

3. Native students transferred from BIA schools to REAA schools would become eligible for Johnson O'Malley support.

The report concluded with a listing of alternatives and noted their probable impact. Basically the options were as follows:

Option I. Schools be transferred on request of local communities with no BIA financial participation other than start-up costs.

Option II. BIA negotiate directly with the REAAs which had gained village concurrence for transfer through resolutions. (The impact statement noted that this would mean negotiating with the affected REAAs rather than with the State.)

Option III. BIA would transfer schools to the State with (a) two-year funding for teacher aides; (b) two-year funding for food service programs; and (c) start-up costs as noted under Option I.

Option IV. In addition to Option III above, the BIA would reimburse the Department of Education for the amount of the State's payments in lieu of local revenue, computed at $575 for the 1977 school year.

Option V. The Bureau would accept the State position as stated in the Governor's letter of January 1977: fundamentally, that the Bureau provide financial assistance to the REAA districts for supplemental programs for two years; and that the BIA provide the State reimbursement for expenditures above and beyond normal State entitlement, less P.L. 874 funds, to be phased out for any transferred school over a five-year period.

The Task Force Report also recommended that there be developed guidelines for school transfers in Alaska which could include methodology for assessing financial and program needs, guidelines for securing village concurrence, and means for measuring the impact on school operations subsequent to transfer.

Actions Following the Task Report

On May 5, 1977, Raymond Butler, Acting Deputy Commissioner of Indian Affairs, wrote to Governor Hammond stating that after consideration of the Task Force report the Bureau was proposing that the State and the Bureau move toward finalizing an agreement based on Option IV of the report "or some part of it."

On July 20, 1977, Governor Hammond responded to Mr. Butler, stating in the second paragraph:

> *If my understanding is correct, the Option No. 4 of which you speak in your letter is in addition to the efforts of Senator Stevens to provide the difference between Public Law 874 payments and the foundation formula costs per pupil to the State of Alaska in a five-year phaseout program. Under this assumption, the state is pleased with your choice of options and I am sure we can proceed to finalize an agreement.*

As yet there has been no official response from the Bureau to Governor Hammond's letter. The transfer program has "bogged down" again, however. Only one school may be transferred in 1977-78.

Policy Issues

There appear to be several policy matters still to be resolved in connection with the transfer of schools and the future role of the Bureau in Alaskan education. The REAAs are so new that their operations are still not on firm ground and it is possible that there could be modifications to the present organizational pattern. For example, some communities might see fit to incorporate as first class cities and become city school districts, and some areas might organize as boroughs and become borough school districts. Two of these policy concerns are summarized below.

Policy Issue: Financing of Transferred Schools

> In view of the fact that there appears to be no legal question but that the State of Alaska has the responsibility to provide education for all its children and youth and has in the creation of the Regional Educational Attendance Area districts (REAAs) included all areas now served by Federal schools without any exclusion clause, is the State justified in asking for reimbursement by the BIA on the basis of total State funding requirements on a five-year declining basis (100% the first year, 80% the second year, etc.) plus one-time transfer costs?

Financing school transfers has been the most evident problem for many years. The question of basic and supplemental program support, and the related question of financing the upgrading of present facilities and the provision of new facilities, has been dominant in discussions and proposals over the last thirty years and has far overshadowed any questions of curriculum, staffing, and program.

In asking full reimbursement for all the State cost of assumption of a transferred school by a REAA (Public School Foundation Act entitlement plus in-lieu-of local tax payments) the first year and declining support for an additional four years, the State rationale appears to be based on the lack of a tax base for the support of rural schools and the point that total State support of schools in the REAAs raises the question of fiscal fairness with respect to support of schools in other districts. The phase-out of the special entitlement rate for federal funds under P.L. 874, now entering the third year, has increased the State's financial contribution. State officials also note that the State has already assumed a considerable amount of funding formerly provided by the BIA by providing full costs of the boarding home program and by the agreement under the Tobeluk case to provide secondary schools.

A very strongly related question of finance is the potential cost of upgrading transferred facilities to State standards, which is estimated to be as high as forty million dollars, and the projected need for construction dollars for elementary and secondary schools in the REAAs, estimated at as high as three million dollars over the next five to ten years. (The Department of Transportation and Public Facilities is currently undertaking an appraisal of upgrading needs at 23 BIA school locations.)

The Bureau of Indian Affairs' position is that the Federal government has no legal obligation to finance schools which are transferred to the State--these schools, once they become part of the REAA operation, should be entitled to

full support under State foundation entitlement and in-lieu payments as is any other school in the REAA. They note that the continuing operation of Federal schools in Alaska is not a legal obligation--it is not based on any reservation status or special treaties--but is instead only a "trust" responsibility.

Enabling legislation for the REAAs does not provide for them to hold title to real property--this is still in the hands of the State, which also assumes responsibility for the major maintenance and repair of existing school facilities and for new construction. Thus, the present policy of the Bureau to transfer title to schools, where such title is not affected by the Native land claims settlement, on an "as is, where is" basis, relates directly to the State rather than to the REAA.

The question may well be asked if the time has come where the negotiations on transfer, particularly the financial questions involved, may not have to be undertaken directly at a higher level than the Department of Education and the Area Director's office. There is the related question of whether legislative assent by the Congress and the State should be sought. Some thought might well be given toward introduction of legislation at the Federal level which would constitute enabling legislation for culmination of the transfer effort, with authorization for appropriations to meet the transfers as well as perhaps resolving some of the uncertainties of the Indian Self-Determination Act as applied to Alaska. An appropriate resolution of the State Legislature accepting the agreed-upon terms would then be in order, or the State resolution could be in advance and seek Congressional concurrence and commitment.

Policy Issue: Application of the Indian Self-Determination Act to Native Education in Alaska

> Although the contracting for administration of Federally supported educational services, including the actual operation of village schools in Alaska, appears to be within the broad purview of the Indian Self-Determination Act, would such actions in Alaska be in the best interests of education for rural Alaska Natives?

It has been interpreted by Federal officials that the provision of the Indian Self-Determination Act with regard to the contracting for services, including education, is within the scope and intent of the Act. The Act defines "Indian" tribes as "any Alaska Native village or regional or village corporation as defined or established pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act." However, this language does not adequately cover the question of tribal identification in Alaska. The regional non-profit corporations created

by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act encompass, in at least several instances, more than one "tribe" as defined or interpreted by the Native people themselves. The writer has been told that even in the case of village corporations there may be more than one tribe involved insofar as the Natives themselves perceive the tribal situation. As one Native leader expressed to the writer, "They try to tell us what is a tribe but we know our own tribal arrangements--they don't." So, depending on definition, and who is doing the interpreting, there could be as few as twelve or more than 400 tribes in Alaska.

Senator Gravel has proposed legislation that would designate the twelve non-profit regional corporations in Alaska as "tribes" for the purposes of the Act. Generally speaking, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has already recognized this definition in the contracting of services other than education to some regional non-profit corporations. There have been indications from some villages that they would not want a contract for their school operation to be handled by a regional corporation. Perhaps there is some concern that contracting is a hidden form of the old expressed policy of termination of all Bureau services or that the local control which they desire would become regional control. Among concerns on the part of the Bureau officials, probably shared by some villages, is that when a service is contracted, the contracting agency, such as a regional non-profit corporation, uses a substantial amount of the funds available for administration and overhead, resulting in less funds being available for the programs.

There have been tentative moves made on a regional level toward seeking a contractual relationship for operating schools. It is clear that the Bureau office in Juneau is not encouraging any one option and, thus far, there is no record of any individual village seeking contracting authority. However, the potential of contracting for school services introduces complexity to the school transfer picture.

In summary, although progress toward the transfer of BIA schools to the Alaska system has been slow, there is reason to hope that with the attention now being focused on the problem, solutions acceptable to the federal government, the state, and the villages choosing to transfer will be forthcoming.

Notes

1. "Report of the Task Force on the Transfer of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools to the State of Alaska" (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of the Commissioner, March 25, 1977).

A TEACHER PERSPECTIVE ON DECENTRALIZATION

James Alter

Introduction

There is no single perspective on education in the 21 REAAs that evolved from the State-Operated School System (SOS) and the Alaska Unorganized Borough School District (AUBSD). It would be incredible if there were.

The approximately 700 REAA teachers teach in very diverse situations. Their schools range in size from one to 47 teachers. The communities in which they teach represent at least 19 distinctive linguistic/cultural backgrounds. Depending on the location, their communication systems either may provide daily contact with the rest of the world or, at best, only a once-a-week mail service. The communities may have electricity, running water, refined petroleum fuels, fire protection, garbage service, and paved streets; or none of these. Climatic environments range from that of the mild maritime to the cold arctic. Not surprisingly, these teachers' attitudes and feelings about teaching in REAAs are also diverse.

Thus, any proposed teacher perspective will certainly not be true of every REAA, every rural school, or each teacher. Instead, it will be both speculative and general. The manner in which data for this paper were gathered further contributes to the speculative nature of its posited perspectives. Adequate time or foresight for a systematic survey of teachers did not exist. Thus, none was made. Instead, the opinions expressed in this paper are based upon the author's recall of experiences in working with about half of the REAA teachers during the 1976-77 school year.

Nevertheless, in recalling last year, care has been taken to mention only generalizations which appear to be widely true. Thus, the exceptional situations are given virtually no space in this paper.

In an effort to illustrate points made, numerous specific instances are listed. Deliberately, there has been no attempt to make an exhaustive listing of such illustrative instances nor to cite the specific time and place of each. To have done so seems, to the author, contrary to the constructive intention of this paper; namely, to strengthen a new educational structure by identifying concerns that were real for teachers. As the people who directly and regularly represented the REAA to the students and their parents, teachers had a unique vantage point. They experienced, on a daily basis, the effects of the new system from several directions: from the REAA board, the administration, the Community School Committee, the parents, and the students.

It appears that, overall, teacher reactions to the first year of the REAAs' existence have been more negative than positive. This is strikingly illustrated by the high teacher turnover in REAAs at the end of the first year. A check on roughly half of the REAA teachers revealed that teacher turnover at the end of the 1976-77 school year was approximately 40 percent. Out of every 100 REAA teachers 40 did not return to their REAA. This contrasts with an approximate 20 percent turnover in independent, rural, school districts and a 25 to 29 percent annual turnover in SOS and AUBSD.

Concern about quality education demands answers to questions such as, *Why are teachers leaving REAAs in such large numbers?* and *What can be done to slow, and hopefully stop, this exodus?*

Undoubtedly, one reason for the high turnover was the dichotomy between what teachers thought decentralization of SOS would be like and what it actually was. With decentralization, teachers anticipated that they would have ideal teaching situations: adequate staff, materials, and facilities, and would be backed up by a supportive administration. In REAAs there would no longer be a distant, sluggish, uninformed administration. Teachers, boards, and administrators would be supporting one another as they worked toward quality education. Unfortunately, at the end of the REAAs' first year, that image was not nearly so prevalent. Instead, a new perception of reality existed.

Teacher Rights

Part of that perception was that teachers' individual civil rights, as well as professional rights and reputations, were under attack.

Teachers were characterized as members of a self-serving, irresponsible profession by REAA boards. Board members have been told over the last two years by a variety of state-wide organizations and educational administrators that teachers were the blight of rural Alaska education. A common ruse was to characterize teachers as the REAA "rip-off" artists. Their salaries were said to be exorbitantly high and skyrocketing. Their salaries were, on the whole, lower than those of teachers in other districts and rose no faster than the cost of living. The superintendents, on the other hand, had skyrocketing (a 40 percent increase since the 1975-76 school year) salaries which are higher than their non-REAA counterparts. Nevertheless, it was the teachers and not the superintendents who were the board scapegoats.

Teachers not only felt they were inaccurately characterized, but also felt superintendents and the state school board association were encouraging demagogic attacks upon them at the REAA level. A typical attack was one made by the chairperson of a REAA board which was plagued with erratic

attendance that consequently threatened the maintenance of a quorum on numerous occasions. Rather than dealing with this issue, the board chairperson launched an attack on the region's teachers, charging them with erratic attendance at school. When his allegation was challenged, he could cite no specifics. Nevertheless, he persisted in his general attack while the superintendent, who knew the inaccuracy of the attack, remained silent. Meanwhile, at the State level, School Board Association officials reported that REAA boards had demonstrated exemplary skill in relating with their teachers.

On a more individualized basis, REAA teachers found that their statutory and constitutional rights weren't what they were during SOS days. The price of teaching in a REAA seemed to be, in many boards' and administrators' minds, subjugation of individual civil liberties to the will of the community. State and federal laws were no longer supreme. Instead, local desire dominated. Ironically, this placed the teacher in essentially the same position in which Native students used to find themselves--promised, by law, protections that were, in fact, disregarded.

Some of these rights' violations stemmed from ignorance. Typical of this ignorance was the principal who told a teacher she had to quit because she was going to take maternity leave, or the superintendent who attempted to hold a hearing on the nonretention of a teacher without giving the teacher any due process rights. Incidents like these never should have occurred. Administrators should have known what the teacher's rights were, or at least consulted with the REAA lawyer. Yet the lawyers were rarely contacted.

Other rights' violations reflected deliberate, calculated attempts by REAAs to ignore prescribed teacher rights. For instance, consider the REAA which denied a nonretained teacher a hearing before the board on his nonretention. In that situation, the REAA readily admitted it was not complying with the law. Furthermore, it indicated that the only way it would comply with the law would be if it were forced to through legal action. In other words, the only way the teacher could get his statutory hearing was by means of a legal complaint and attendant financial burden.

Still other teacher rights' abrogations were the result of genuine philosophical differences between the teacher and the REAA over the primacy of civil liberties in opposition to community/regional will. The situation in which a teacher was suspended for writing personal letters critical of the REAA illustrates the typical dilemma, in spite of the State statute which provides:

> No bylaw or regulation of the commissioner of education, a school board, or local school administrator may re-

> strict or modify the right of a teacher to engage in comment and criticism outside school hours, regarding school personnel, members of the governing body of any school or school district, any other public official, or any school employee, to the same extent that any private individual may exercise the right. (A.S. 14.20.095)

Which is more important: the right of the individual teacher or the community as a whole?

More often than not, this general, broad-based dilemma was not debated or perceived as the key issue. Instead the debates narrowed down to more specific issues. Arguments presented by teachers tended to state:

> * Since they weren't given prior notice of the community expectations, they can't now be fired for not living up to these expectations. These prior notices should have been made known to the teachers before the teachers were hired.
>
> * The challenged behavior doesn't really interfere with the teacher's skills as an instructor and should not influence his/her continued employment. Those items that do constitute interference should be jointly identified by the teachers and community.
>
> * Nonretention by a REAA places an indelible mark on a teacher's employment record and negatively impacts his/her future teaching opportunities. Thus, it is particularly unjust to nonretain a teacher because of some idiosyncrasy inconsistent with community expectations but having nothing to do with instructional skills.
>
> * The desire for nonretention is not coming from the whole community. Instead, it is the result of a personality conflict with just a few people and, thus, is not broad-based enough to justify nonretaining the teacher.

REAA teachers found the assaults on their individual rights to be the manifestation of a new educational paternalism. In this paternalism, the teachers were told what they could and couldn't do. It became difficult to "sort out" how much of this paternalism reflected genuine cultural concerns and how much was a cover up for the self-consciousness and lack of self-confidence of new boards and administrators. In an effort to both protect their own rights, and advance this "sorting out" of the genuine concerns from the cover up, REAA teachers protested their loss of individual freedom

to local control (just as Native Alaskans protested their denial of local control under former systems of education).

Administration

There is probably an even greater contrast between the teacher-imagined and actual REAA administration than the "before and after" perceptions of personal and professional rights discussed above.

Administrative reform was a primary reason that teachers supported the decentralization of SOS as vigorously as they did. Through the creation of REAAs it was hoped that the administrative bureaucracy would not only be reduced but also be more responsive to teacher needs. Unfortunately, neither hope was realized.

Instead, the new REAA administrative bureaucracies have seemed to be even more top-heavy and unresponsive than AUBSD was. Typical of this newly created frustration was the experience of the REAA teacher who sought an explanation of three different procedures--including teacher evaluation--from his superintendent. For each of the three, the teacher was told that although procedures did exist in written form, he must see a different person in the district office. None of the three was in the office that day. Thus, the teacher left a written request for the information desired and ultimately got one of the three procedures.

The increase in REAA central office personnel and budgets between the 1975-76 school year and this one supports teacher perceptions of a rapidly expanding central bureaucracy. REAAs employ 75 percent more central office administrators and spend almost 50 percent more money for central offices than AUBSD did.

Furthermore, the developing REAA administrative bureaucracies have been distressingly similar to AUBSD's. Superintendents and top administrators seemingly were hired not on the basis of skill and background, but because they were available when the REAAs were formed. Of the 21 new REAA superintendents last year, 16 came from AUBSD and four more from within Alaska. This year all but two of last year's superintendents still hold those positions. This differs significantly from other Alaskan districts in which, over the past three years, annual superintendent turnover has ranged from 20 to 30 percent.

This ingrown nature of REAA administration is further aggravated by the apparent failure to thoroughly screen new administrators to REAAs prior to their hiring. Otherwise, administrators nonretained by one district wouldn't have been immediately hired by another. Illustrative of several

known instances of this inadequate screening is the case of the building principal who failed miserably in a village of about 500. Because he couldn't work with his staff and was a social isolationist in the village, the regional board nonretained him. Yet, during the summer, this person was hired by another REAA to be its assistant superintendent for curriculum development.

Faced with a larger, but essentially the same, administrative bureaucracy of AUBSD days, teachers understandably began to feel that there was no hope of reforming rural school administration. Their experiences during the first year of the REAAs reinforced their belief that, in general, there must be a change. The typical REAA administrator had neither extensive teaching experience nor adequate training in how to skillfully administer schools. Instead he/she had gained an administrative position "instantly" after a minimal (two or three years) amount of teaching experience.

One area in which this lack of depth quickly became obvious was in personnel relations. Frequently there was no administrative attempt to be honest, direct, straightforward, or sincere. Consider, as illustrations: the assistant superintendent who lied to new teachers he recruited from "outside" about the housing conditions in a village with neither running water nor sewers; the superintendent who never discussed concerns with a village teacher while visiting the village but, instead, relied exclusively on written memos mailed later; the principal who polled a faculty on which option to follow and, after announcing the poll results, unilaterally selected an option that received no support; or the superintendent who fired teachers who notified him as early as April that they would not return the following September.

Another area in which administrative depth was needed but lacking was that of employee/employer relations. Consequently, a REAA's response to teachers as an organized group typically generated more teacher frustration and dissatisfaction than anything else. As a result, high levels of animosity and polarization have developed over activities such as teacher negotiations. During last year 12 of the 21 REAAs had serious breakdowns in teacher contract negotiations. This may have been avoided if the REAAs' administrations had encompassed a more diverse background. With increased understanding, neither would some superintendents have attempted to directly inject themselves into the affairs and organization of a teachers' association. Nor would board negotiators have agreed to an item at the bargaining table only to either totally reverse themselves at a later time or unilaterally rewrite what was agreed upon.

Unfortunately, during their first year, REAA boards didn't identify or promptly correct administrative deficiencies. Instead, they contributed, consciously and unconsciously, to the administrative shortcomings. Frequently the boards were manipulated by the administration into assuming

administrative, as opposed to policy, roles. In one case, a board member was told by the superintendent that it was her duty to notify a teacher of h[illegible] nonretention and the reasons therefore. At other times board members were simply irresponsible in fulfilling their duties, as when they failed to actively participate in their meetings; find out the facts of a situation; and/or exercise independent judgment.

A more intrinsic flaw in the functioning of REAA boards which greatly concerned teachers was the conflict of interest situations in which board members constantly found themselves. Inevitably, board members served on regional and village profit and nonprofit corporations and, more often than not, operated their own businesses as well. Frequently they appeared to make policy decisions which, first and foremost, served their own economic interests. Teachers became very cynical about a board which, for instance, spent an extra $10,000 a year to rent office space from the same corporation on which a majority of them sat as directors instead of renting a cheaper, equally adequate building. Teachers questioned the motivation of a board which made questionable staffing and maintenance decisions that provided the board members' air taxi operations with significant increases in revenue. Whether justifiable or not, teachers saw those boards as encouraging irresponsible, incompetent REAA administration.

Thus, the first year of operation decreased rather than increased teacher confidence in REAA administration. In most cases, neither the central administrative staff nor the regional board was seen as doing a competent job of school management. Therefore, frustrated and discouraged, teachers left the REAAs in search of more ideal teaching situations.

Instruction

An area of both disillusionment and discouragement as well as encouragement and improvement for REAA teachers was the instructional/professional setting. New teachers found their teaching assignments to be radically different than what they expected. Experienced teachers found their professional autonomy and latitude slowly constricting. At the same time both new and experienced teachers found, in virtually every REAA, that instructional materials were more readily available than ever before.

The new teacher to a "bush" REAA seemed to quickly adapt and succeed or suffer through the year and leave. Few appeared to fall into a middle category. It is not difficult to understand why. The typical new REAA teachers were young, inexperienced teachers from out-of-state. They simply were not prepared for what they encountered. No one advised them what their new communities were like. Neither were they provided with a meaningful preservice orientation to their district, its people, students, and procedures. Thus, they started school in a state of shock which many never overcame.

This was all the more likely if the teachers encountered teaching situations for which they were totally unprepared. Maybe the teacher, whose specialty background was, at best, in two discipline areas, was instructed to instantly develop and implement a complete high school curriculum. Or maybe the inexperienced teacher was told to take over a multigraded, bilingual, elementary class.

As if these instructions were not mind-boggling enough, our typical teachers soon discovered that they were on their own. Experienced personnel and guidance seemed to be minimally available. Not surprisingly, many of these teachers quickly decided (10 percent in one REAA, as of October) to leave as soon as possible.

Experienced bush teachers also found teaching in REAAs different from that to which they were accustomed. No longer did they have the professional latitude and autonomy which they used to enjoy. They were more closely scrutinized and observed, with increasing frequency. They were expected to standardize their curriculum content and materials, using the same texts, scope and sequence, and methodologies. Possibly because such standardization removed an important element of individual flexibility, or because it just was not the standard the teacher would have picked, teachers were uncomfortable with these changes. The experienced bush teachers were also painfully aware of the fact that class sizes in about two-thirds of the REAAs were larger than they had been two years ago; half of those by as many as three or four students. Consequently, they, too, have taken a more questioning attitude about the desirability of teaching in a REAA.

Counterbalancing these negative aspects of teaching in the REAAs was the fact that instructional materials and equipment were more available than ever before. In virtually every REAA more money was available for purchase of instructional materials and equipment than there was under AUBSD. There also appeared to be more flexibility in the purchase of materials, especially at a local level, than before. Finally the REAAs did have a faster response time to requisitions for purchase than AUBSD did.

Housing

Another thorny concern of teachers in the REAAs has been their housing. Although the issue was only partially considered by SOS and AUBSD, the REAAs, during the first year, brought housing to the forefront of teacher concerns. In reaction to some of the radical changes instituted in housing policies in the REAAs, teachers transferred out.

The basic problem seemed to be that there was not adequate housing available. In SOS days, the problem of housing was not so severe. There

weren't so many teachers with no adequate housing and the rents were low enough to make the inadequacies and scarcity of housing tolerable. Furthermore, SOS was generally perceived as clearly trying to find a housing solution. Last year the situation was reversed.

Last year, in most communities teachers could not build their own homes because land was simply not available for private owners. Teachers were forced to be renters. Their rental rates were rapidly increasing. Typically, REAA rental rates have doubled or tripled in the past two years. The rental rates of private landlords have often increased even more. Meanwhile, salaries have increased about 15 percent. Thus, the teachers' purchasing power has been significantly diminished.

In most REAAs, housing was much more difficult for teachers to obtain than it used to be. Often the district had given up its teacher housing or stopped guaranteeing private units for teachers. Furthermore, in many communities, especially those with new secondary programs, there were more teachers seeking the same low number of houses. Inevitably, some teachers ended up living in the school or in a very substandard house.

All of the above factors tended to make teachers' housing in REAAs a volatile and emotional issue. However, it wouldn't be the polarizing issue that it has become if the REAAs hadn't seen housing as the means to retaliate against teachers for alleged past transgressions. Nevertheless, that was what happened. REAAs denied any interest or concern in even considering possible solutions to the need for teacher housing. Instead, they claimed there was no housing problem, indirectly encouraged landlords to charge exorbitant rates for their rental units, and went out of their way to divest themselves of any housing units the REAA controlled.

Teacher Reactions

The above perceptions are real and serious ones for REAA teachers. During last year these perceptions decidedly influenced teacher attitudes and actions. However, it would be far from accurate to say that the only teacher reaction was to leave. More teachers stayed than left. Both those who stayed and those who left reacted in a variety of additional ways.

One way was to organize into teacher associations for the purpose of collective action. Far more REAA teachers belong to a teachers' association than did two years ago. Association membership in the REAA has increased over the past two years by almost 40 percent, while it has stayed steady or slightly dropped in other Alaskan districts. Furthermore, the level of active involvement in these associations has increased many fold. Previously, relatively few teacher leaders represented SOS teachers; now there are 21 sets of leaders representing REAA teachers.

A natural corollary to this large increase in leadership and involvement has been, however, a more diversified course of action by the teachers. No longer are they under a unified leadership, going in a single direction. In that respect they may not be as potent a group as they were before when their number was smaller, but leadership more cohesive.

A second corollary of this increased involvement in association activities is that teachers generally are more aware of their collective, as well as individual, rights, benefits, and needs.

Another direct consequence of the formation of the REAAs has been increased teacher involvement in their local communities. Just as local interest and involvement in the school has significantly increased during the REAAs' first year, so has teacher involvement in the communities. More of a dialogue and mutual involvement has developed between teacher and community.

Involvement has, in turn, resulted in local alliances of parents, community leaders, and teachers to combat regional demagoguery and harrassment. Consistently, over the past year, the parents and citizens of local communities have rallied to the support of their teachers when they felt the teachers were getting a raw deal at the regional level. Sometimes that support--often in the form of petitions, statements, or letters--has reversed the action of a REAA board and/or superintendent. Other times, when it hasn't, lingering community hostility toward the REAA board and central administration has resulted. In all cases, it has strengthened the teacher-community bond.

Teachers have also reacted to the changes they have experienced during the REAAs' first year by slowly increasing their involvement in the political process. Teachers are increasingly aware that potential solutions to their problems lie in the hands of politicians--at both the regional and State level. Thus, they are contributing more money and effort to political campaigns, lobbying their board members and legislators more, and are more closely monitoring the actions of these representatives on items of interest. The consequences of such efforts remain to be seen.

The Future

After one year, many REAA teachers have left--far more than in SOS days. However, more stayed than left.

Because of their basically optimistic orientation, REAA teachers generally hope and feel that things will be better than the REAAs' first year. The teachers know that in at least a couple of REAAs, exciting educational things

are happening. Teachers in those REAAs feel they are dealt with individually and collectively in a fair, evenhanded manner. Teachers in those districts are valued as professionals striving to better the quality of education. Those boards and administrators work with the teachers, rather than against them, to solve problems. Whether these few REAAs are the precursors of the future or the exceptions to the rule is unclear. Teachers clearly hope they are the indicators of changes to come.

INDEPENDENCE BRINGS PROBLEMS, TRIUMPHS

Mary O. Halloran

In education, as in other arenas, Alaskans are independently minded. Elsewhere in the nation, schools are being closed and districts consolidated, with many facing financial disaster. Here, 21 new districts and around fifty new secondary schools opened last fall. And in the last legislative session, the state legislature adjusted school funding so that more than an additional twenty million dollars will be pumped into the state's schools by 1979.

The 21 new districts opened a year ago, on July 1, 1976, the product of a quiet revolution in Alaska education. They were carved from Alaska's huge unorganized territory which stretches from the Bering Straight to Metlakatla, from the upper Yukon clear out to the end of the Aleutian chain. They contain around 10,000 students in about 100 schools.

For several years, the vast territory was administered through the State-Operated Schools as one school system. It was an operation beset by difficulties and disagreements. At the core of the problems was the issue of control. Unlike the rest of Alaska's schools, the SOS district was not headed by an elected school board. In 1975 legislation ended SOS and led to the creation of the 21 new districts. Control shifted from an Anchorage-located administrative office to 21 district school boards elected by district residents.

During the first year of independent operation, the new districts faced a myriad of tasks. Many began on July 1, 1976, without a district office, much less the paraphernalia of phones, adding machines and typewriters. Administrators, bookkeepers and clerical help had to be hired, policies set, teachers' contracts negotiated, books and supplies ordered, *ad infinitum*. But this summer the districts celebrated their first birthdays, having survived despite the high potential for mishap.

"The smoothness of the whole transition would have to go down as a major accomplishment," said Bill Overstreet, executive secretary of the Association of Alaska School Boards. "Those new boards have done as well as the city and borough boards have done. They've a lot of leadership out there, with a variety of experiences, that caused them to be damn good board members."

Overstreet was particularly pleased with the way the regional boards handled teacher contract negotiations. "These new boards, being new, have been much more appreciative of the concept of local control and much more reluctant to cave in to the unions. They didn't gain local control to give it away to the unions," he said.

Overstreet sees the issue of control continuing, citing legislation introduced last session. The proposed bill would make binding arbitration part of the negotiations process. The bill failed passage by one vote in the

Senate, with rural legislators making the difference in the outcome. NEA/ Alaska has announced that passage of the bill will be its top priority for the coming session.

"So that question still hangs over our heads. Will our schools be governed by locally elected people or by appointed arbitrators? Unless the city cousins learn something from their rural cousins, we'll lose the battle," said Overstreet.

Despite the general smoothness mentioned by Overstreet, the transition has had its rough spots. Lower Kuskokwim superintendent Al Weinberg said that the biggest problem was the lack of proper preparation for the changeover.

"We inherited a seven million dollar a year business without any proper administrative foundation," said Weinberg. He listed the lacks of a district accounting system, insurance and provision for workmen's compensation as examples of major administrative hassles the new district found itself with as it began.

Another district superintendent, Jim Zuelow of Iditarod Area schools, made similar observations. "I think everybody seriously underestimated what we needed to set up a business office," he said. He explained that equipment and personnel records were inaccurate or missing.

A further complication was that nobody knew how much it was going to cost to run a school at any specific site. The SOS accounting procedures did not give the new districts budget information for individual schools.

"The inaccurate and incomplete data we were given was used to develop our administrative systems, so now errors have been compounded. And it's going to cost us money to straighten it out," said Zuelow.

Despite the administrative hassles, both superintendents feel the transition has been a success. "There's absolutely no comparison in the effectiveness with which we operated this year," said Weinberg who had worked seven years for State-Operated Schools. "We knew how much money we had, we knew where it was and could spend it when and where it was needed."

Another pleased with the changeover is June Nelson, president of the Northwest Arctic school board. "On the whole, people know there sure is a better rapport and relationship...they can come in and talk about programs, what they want their kids to learn," she said.

Nelson added, "Funding has been the biggest problem, not in the amount of the lump sum we receive, but just that so many little things have happened to cut into it."

She mentioned ongoing negotiations with the U.S. Office for Civil Rights in connection with the district's alleged noncompliance with federal bilingual education guidelines as one of the unexpected costs.

"That's been a special burden. To inherit a bag of worms, something like that, has not been pleasant," she stated. The federal agency's action was initiated against the former SOS system and then carried over to the new districts.

Nelson also felt that federal regulations and accompanying auditors "hampered district operations." The Northwest Arctic district plans to handle the issue by reducing its reliance on federal funds.

It and other districts may be able to do just that, given the generous readjustment in the state's funding program made by the legislature in the spring, 1977, session. Overstreet said that passage of Senate Bill 212 "should resolve most of the new districts' problems." The bill establishes a funding floor for small schools and compensates for costs related to isolation.

By 1979 the new districts will receive $10 million more than would have been allocated otherwise. City and borough districts will likewise receive an additional ten million dollars by 1979.

The passage of a $59 million bond for school construction last November will eventually result in some 80 construction or renovation projects around the state, many in the new districts. But, procedures set up by the Department of Public Works have been confusing and time-consuming, according to many local superintendents eager to get the projects started.

Alaska Gateway superintendent Carl Peterson stated, "I would like to see the Department of Public Works eliminated from the public school construction area...they're obstructing us." Peterson said that the intricate process was complicated even further because "Public Works keeps changing the procedure."

"Any conceivable blunders the school district might have done would be inconsequential compared to what we've gone through trying to move the bureaucracy," he added.

More resigned was Weinberg who commented, "We can't expect Public Works who's responsible to the legislature to write us a blank check. Construction's a complex task because of all the agencies involved. It's time-consuming and probably too expensive, but all those bureaucratic hoops are supposed to be safeguards."

This fall the new districts plan to concentrate on curriculum and program development. Most also want to work on the district boards' relationships with the Community School Committees, village advisory groups established under the 1975 decentralization law.

Despite the work and the problems, all are sure the new way is better. Most think the real payoff is still in the future, that one year is too soon to count successes or failures. "We believe that we can eventually provide a better quality education to the kids," said Zuelow, "if we didn't believe that, we wouldn't be doing all this."

Whether the payoff comes in one year, five or ten, everybody's happier, if for no other reason than that the problems and the solutions are closer to home. As superintendent Peterson said, "Generally, people here feel very good about the change. They have somebody they can go to and complain if they want to."

PART IV -- SEMINAR

SEMINAR: SUMMARY AND FORECAST

On November 18, 1977, an all-day seminar was held on the Fairbanks campus to discuss the draft form of this report.

The purposes of the seminar, as stated in the letter of invitation, were:

(1) To review the report in progress, including drafts of chapters contributed by those outside of CNER, and to give the contributing authors the opportunity to interact with each other

(2) To relate findings to SB 35 legislation and its implementation, and to discuss whether additional or revised legislation is necessary, and

(3) On the basis of the report, identify issues in need of further policy study, evaluation, and research.

Invitees also were told that the seminar would be recorded and that a selected, edited version of the discussion would be included as the final chapter in the finished report.

Those invited included the contributing authors, representatives from the two REAAs who had assisted CNER with field testing the questionnaire and with the case study, and several individuals whose involvement was considered beneficial to the seminar.

The following individuals attended the meeting:

Contributing authors

Jim Alter, NEA-Alaska, Anchorage
E. Dean Coon, CNER
Frank Darnell, CNER
Paul Goodwin, Consultant, CNER
Kathryn Hecht, CNER
Susan Horton, Graduate Student, University of Alaska-Southeast
Ron Inouye, CNER

Other invitees

William Brady, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Juneau
Sylvia Carlsson, Alaska State Department of Education, Juneau
Darwin Heine, Alaska State Board of Education, Fairbanks
Dick Mueller, Chairman, Yukon Flats School Board, Ft. Yukon
Representative Charles Parr, Chairman, House, Health, Education and Social Services Committee, Fairbanks

Carl Peterson, Superintendent, Alaska Gateway School District, Tok

Others in attendance

David Chanar, Student, University of Alaska, Fairbanks
Karen McPherson, Dena Aka Video Center, Fairbanks
James Orvik, CNER
Irma Jean Stichter, CNER
Sam Towarak, Student, University of Alaska, Fairbanks
Jerry Waddell, CNER

Frank Darnell, Director of CNER, chaired the meeting.

Following the seminar, approximately four hours of audio recording tapes were transcribed. Only selected portions of the meeting are reported here. A broken line indicates where statements have been reordered, by topic, to provide better continuity. Section titles were designated to serve as guides to the topics being discussed. Priority was given to preserving the flow of discussion that occurred during the meeting and the individual speaker's intent.

The authors of this report wish to thank all who participated and hope they will feel their comments are fairly represented. The selected material is quoted as faithfully as possible from the transcript.

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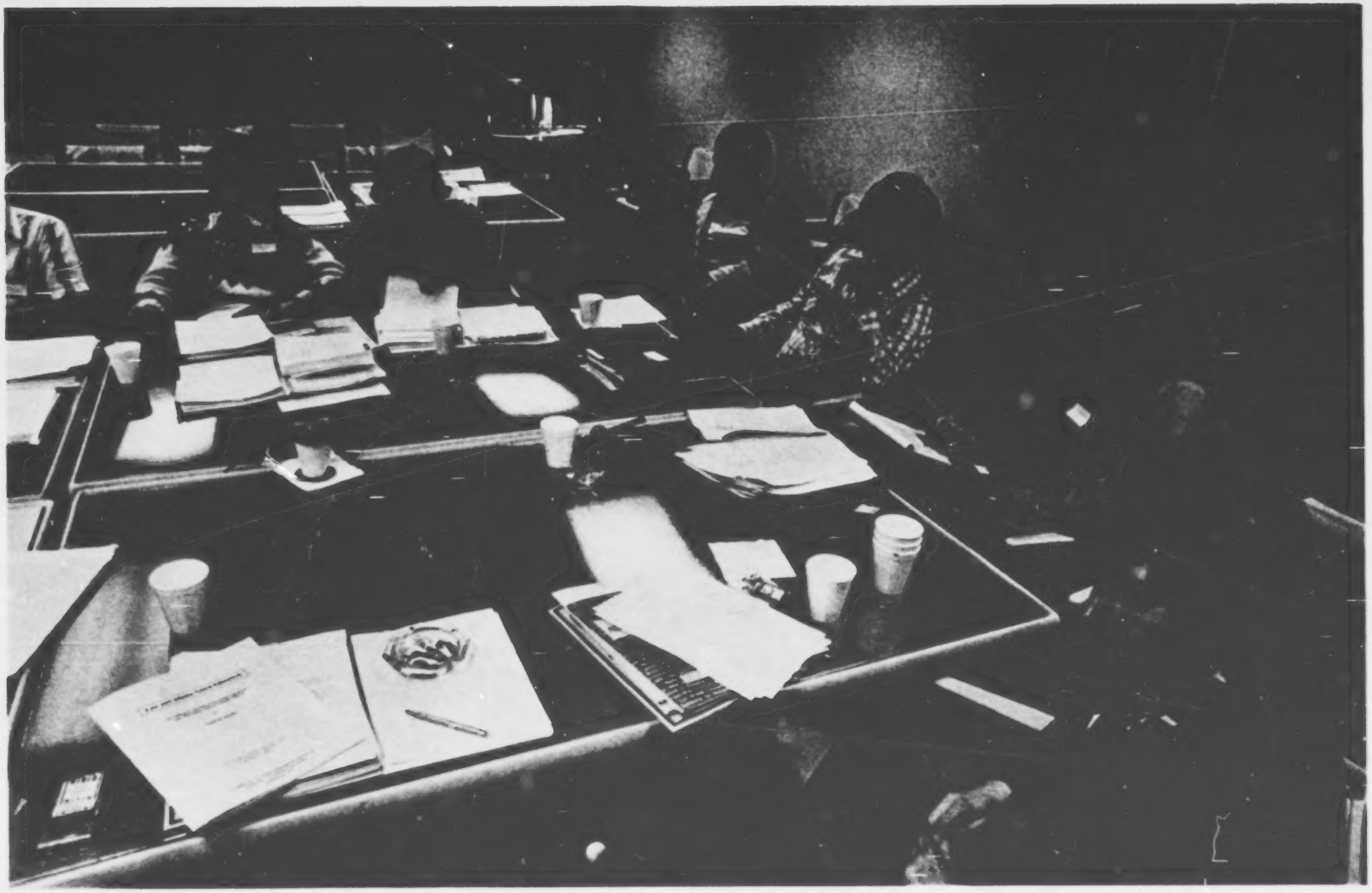


Introduction

Darnell — *It has fallen my lot to be given the opportunity to chair this seminar and to welcome you here. It might be appropriate in opening the session to make a very brief explanation.*

It's been our belief from the outset of the movement to return or initiate the control of educational matters to rural Alaska, that the act of creating the means whereby these conditions could come to pass was probably far less of an effort than the process of implementation of the act. There was a great deal of publicity, and there were a great many people involved in the process that led to the creation of the Rural Educational Attendance Areas. There has been far less in the way of attention to the process of implementation.... Meetings of this nature will help identify the more difficult aspects of implementation and, ultimately, could lead to assisting those people who are faced with the job of carrying it out.

One of the points that I tried to make in the historical perspective is that the movement for REAAs grew out of dissatisfaction with educational programs. REAAs, however, do not directly attack the improvement of educational programs. REAAs are organizational innovations. Organizational innovations usually precede instructional innovations. The ultimate question that we might have is, have the organizational arrangements enhanced the ability of the people within the districts to bring about instructional innovations? The answer may not be the same in every district.

Decision Making in the REAAs and Community School Committees

Peterson — *...in our particular district* [deciding upon a course of instruction] *is the responsibility of each community. We don't attempt from a district level to dictate what they are going to do. As an example of this, I could cite our Ken Cook vocational equipment which we put in on the secondary level and the Distar reading program on the elementary level. These were adopted after a presentation to the district board as a program for the district. However, it then is an independent decision in each of the communities whether or not they wish to include those programs into their particular curriculum.*

Darnell — *Does something that goes to a local community have to have the endorsement of the district first?*

Peterson — *No. It can come the other way around. And we don't attempt necessarily to standardize textbooks or anything of this nature. However, there is a bit of a move under foot for schools that feed into...the high school, that we do some work in trying to standardize the elementary curriculum for those communities. But that has grown out of the communities, not down from the top.*

Darnell — *Does the mechanism exist for the district board to veto a program direction that the local community would want to take?*

Peterson — *Well, your district board is the responsible body. It can sue and be sued. And the CSC cannot. In actuality, I don't think that would ever happen.... The maximum degree of flexibility and responsibility is provided to the local CSC.*

Darnell — *How much is this attitude reflected in other districts? Can those of you who get around* [the state] *respond? Sylvia?*

Carlsson — *We still have to recognize that some districts are larger or smaller, and that makes the difference in the approach that is used. I think Carl has a very ideal-size district opposed to say the Lower Kuskokwim area that has 26 communities within the REAA.... I think it makes a difference in being able to work up relationships between communities and school districts.*

Alter — *I don't think you can necessarily say it's just the function of size because I can think of the Iditarod School District which is relatively small but is moving towards some real standardization because their master plan says they want to try and rotate students and teachers among communities.*

Brady — *The Bureau is administrating Johnson O'Malley funds in public school districts. We have contracts with a good many of these REAAs and we notice a great difference in the applications. Many, like Carl says, come up through the Community School Committee; they are unique to that particular village's needs and wants, and are approved by the regional* [school district] *board. We also deal with districts where they have one plan for the whole district, drawn up by the regional board and then signed off by each of the local* [CSC] *boards.*

Peterson — *You get a tremendous variation among the CSCS from one where you have to keep tight anchors to slow them down to others who are not literate. You mail questionnaires and evaluations.... You are not going to get anything unless you do meet*

Peterson — *with them, assess their feelings and then translate that to the evaluation forms on an individual basis.*

Mueller — *I think that hits the nail on the head and shows why there is a different process going on in one REAA and another, as Sue Horton's report shows. In our district, most of the people are not literate. They have not had beyond 4th or 5th grade [education] in the outlying villages. The board is tending not to give very much power to those CSCs. They feel if they do, they are just throwing education to the wind....*

Now, on the whole issue of Community School Committees, we have some fairly strong opinions on whether they ought to exist.... It's nice to sit back and say, 'that's a neat thing--it ought to really happen out in the villages, but don't let it happen in Fairbanks, Anchorage, or Juneau, or other places where we want to have educators make those educational decisions, but we don't want the parents messing around in that.'

Darnell — *Actually what you are doing is providing for the transition from the old state system or the Bureau system which were wholly paternalistic. You are allowing time in between for the acquisition of skills to carry this out by taking these responsibilities yourself and not necessarily dumping it in the community. Is that what you're saying?*

Mueller — *One thing we're not doing, we're not limiting what they can have.... But we are still requiring the school administration to set up academic standards for every school and then it's up to the community school if they want to go above those standards. But you don't just say, 'Do what you want.'*

Brady — *One point, at least from the Bureau of Indian Affairs standpoint...we reach many groups where we define local control as village control. We have an advisory school board for each school...when they become public, that advisory board has become Board in fact and has control of that local school. Organized boroughs do not have advisory school boards. When the legislature mandates these school districts into boroughs or when they become boroughs themselves, will they dissolve the local school board, or will it be up to the regional boards to allow them one, if they want one or not?*

Darnell — *The present regulations certainly do not prohibit a borough*

Darnell — *school from having advisory boards. As a matter of fact, some of the large ones with rural areas, such as Kenai Peninsula, initiated them at the very outset.... There is nothing that precludes them.*

Brady — *Also, there is the regional concept. I think that people in Anchorage and Juneau think that the REAA boards are as local as you need to get, they don't need to take local control any farther down than that. Yet, going back to these hearings on tribal governing bodies, and the question of whether they should be at the regional or village level,* [it is] *really splitting Native people's feelings as to urban vs. rural, and as to where their power lies.*

Horton — *I know in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough, they have just initiated a community school committee, like the CSCs that are being developed in the REAAs.... The Ketchikan Borough thought that part was such a good idea that they started one.*

Heine — *...it was not that this* [CSCs] *was something that was good just for the REAAs, but they were looking at it as something that would be good even in the organized boroughs.... It was part of the proposed regulation that this would, in fact, occur.*

Constitutionality and Municipal Government

Parr — *...I think that a lot of* [Ninth Legislature] *legislators were so disgusted with SOS, they considered it so bad, that they were willing to go to the REAA concept and not raise the issue of constitutionality. Now what this brought in its train, of course, is coastal zone management* [areas] *and bills to make health districts around the state using REAA boundaries. Resistance is building because the constitution does say that we will delegate powers to boroughs and cities only.*

Carlsson — *It seems to me that one of the things that we need to do is take a look at the system first of all and find out what we're dealing with. One of the questions I've always had in the back of my mind when we started this whole local control movement is, are the REAAs a real part of the system? Some people have said in the past that REAAs are unconstitutional, mainly because they don't hold a particular place in the constitution of the State of Alaska as far as local government is concerned. I think we have to all recognize that we're dealing with a developing system.*

Darnell — *That is one of the points that I keep raising, perhaps excessively, that this is one phase in a whole series of phases; it's not the end result. Constitutional or not, it should be merely looked at as a transitory device.*

Mueller — *To go on to municipal development...there has been quite a bit published, an article very recently in the Tundra Times, about some hearings held out in the villages. Here we have a view of the city against the rural, that the rural is not paying their own way and needs to organize, somehow, to tax the people in the rural areas.... Some of the school districts, once they tax everybody, will pull in maybe $35,000. They couldn't even get an administrator for that sort of money, so is it practical? In our area we're going to a borough very rapidly because we have about 70 or 80 miles of pipeline running through...so to run schools and a borough is no problem for us.*

We wonder, again, if that is a realistic point of view for a lot of other areas that don't have a piece of the pipeline. Where does the money go from the rural areas? That comes right into places like Fairbanks and Anchorage. That's where it all goes. That is where all of our stuff is bought. Even though people think that the rural areas are getting a free ride, all the funds they do have are getting funnelled right back into the cities. And that has shown up in a number of reports.

Legislation versus Regulation

Carlsson — *One thing that is rather amazing to some of us is the fact that Senate Bill 35 was implemented without rules and regulations. Nearly every piece of legislation that comes out has in it a charge from the legislature to develop rules and regulations for implementation. SB 35 did not because there was no time.*

Darnell — *To what extent did the legislature deliberately keep this in their domain? ...Typically Alaska has fewer laws regulating legislation than nearly all other states, thus allowing the State Board to develop regulations. ...might some of the problems you experience be better resolved if they were regulated by the Board instead of having to take the legislative route each time a change is brought about? That's a question that goes beyond REAAs in general. It is the whole question of the degree to which a board has authority vis-a-vis the legislature.... Darwin, does the*

Darnell — *State Board discuss the difference between regulatory authority and things handed down from the Legislature very often?*

Heine — *Speaking only for myself, I think some of the problems that the Board has to deal with are problems resulting from the legislature. Not that they pass the legislation but they get in and start spelling out details about things that have to be applied throughout the state and that backs you into a corner. While they're complaining about what Washington, D.C., does--after all, Alaska isn't the same as, say, New York state--we have the same thing here, parts of the state that are different and so are their problems. Sometimes I feel the legislature goes too far, getting too specific on some things.*

Mueller — *There is a tendency to think in the rural areas that if you want something that is going to affect your school in particular, you have a better chance in getting it through the legislature than through the State Board of Education, for a number of reasons. One reason is that most of that which is proposed to the State Board of Education is proposed by the Department of Education. If you can't convince somebody in the Department of Education (where you have your Native representative, Sylvia, and that's about it)...it's hard to get to the State Board. Where if you want to get to the legislature, all you have to do is find one Native representative who will bring it up on the floor, and if he can make deals with someone along the line to pull votes, something like SB 35 gets passed.... I wonder how long it would have taken* [for SB 35] *to go through the State Board of Education? I think that is what a lot of rural people are reading. Where do you have a power base to influence what you need? Let's say from our point of view, it's in the legislature.*

Darnell — *Yes* [one question]*...when SB 35 was proposed, was why is it even necessary? The State Board has authority to do that without* [legislation] *which they always did have and never did* [use]*. It is true--the political process seems to generate results sooner.*

Mueller — *But still, there is the question--should the legislature be making educational laws? And I think that it is one that the people really need to look at. But the ones who say yes are going to say yes because they have some influence on them* [the legislators]*. We feel we have more influence on them than we do on the people who ought to be making the educational regulations.*

Carlsson — *I just want to make a point--generally, on what you might*

Carlsson — *call a Native point of view and that is, going from the Alaska Native land claims, it was easier to achieve a settlement with a legislative route as opposed to the courts or any other means; [this] gave, I think, Native people confidence in working in the whole political arena as opposed to working with the systems that exist. I think it's going to be interesting in the future to see whether or not that changes. Right now many people have confidence in being able to influence change through the political arena.*

Mueller — *Sylvia's point may be the very reason why the boards are having problems with administration. Probably the majority of REAA board members were Native politicians. They were holding some Native corporation office, or RurAL CAP or something along that line. They had all been involved with SB 35 and the political arena. So now, when it comes down to working with superintendents, working with the system, it's pretty tough to do, because we're used to dealing politically....*

Carlsson — *We discuss the influence of federal and state legislation upon the education of rural Alaska Natives--I think we might turn that around and say the influence of rural Alaska Natives upon the federal and state education legislation. I've viewed the local control issue as one thing--the access to the political system in order to influence the quality of education. That to me is the essence of local control.*

Concept of Local Control

Heine — *What do you mean by local control? Sometimes the State Board is accused of getting involved in areas where they shouldn't have. Of course, we do have the other kind of conflict. One area will say, on a particular regulation, that you are usurping the powers of local control, and others say that you are giving in and are not doing enough.*

The thing that I wonder, as we hear this term used, is to recall that it is the state's responsibility for education and the State Board of Education was set up to oversee this. Actually the local boards are sort of extensions of the State Board.... In reality we have a responsibility and we can't just give it up completely. We'd like to feel that we can draw up regulations, guidelines or minimum standards, and then leave the implementation at the local level to meet the local needs. I don't think this has been a big problem. Once in awhile you wonder whether there is a misconception, or just what do they really mean by local control and do they understand what the role of the State Board is?

Chanar — *I think what needs to be clarified is the concept that the State Board of Education holds as far as local control. Let's not forget that the concept of local control is very foreign to the rural areas and for us to assume they know what it means--I think it's dangerous.... If we don't educate people to let them know what local control is, what they can do under it, what responsibility they have--then there's going to be some misunderstanding. ...Most people who know the concept take it for granted that those people out there know it, when they don't really know what it's all about.*

Heine — *I would mention as one of the priorities the Board had a year ago was to find ways to improve the communication.... What you say is good...we've tried so many different things to see what you can do, and I guess you make progress slowly.*

Native Boards

Darnell — *As Sylvia pointed out to me, the majority of boards are now Native boards, and by far the majority of board members are of Native background, counting the state as a whole, which is a complete reversal of just three years ago.*

Carlsson — *It is also an historical event, and certainly something that has not happened anywhere else in the United States.*

Board "Training"

Goodwin — *I would suggest that a very substantial effort be put into board training in particular. Not so much from the standpoint of going out there and training the boards, but just working at the question of board training. What does board training mean?*

I tried to point out in my paper that we don't need to train them to care, to be involved with the children's education. They've got all that now. Then what are we training them for? Are we training them procedurally or are we training them philosophically? Are we trying to impose the system as it exists here onto there? In my opinion, just simply taking the system as it exists and providing procedural training is not the answer. It's something else. I think a certain amount of effort should be put into the question of what that something else is. For instance, I can just as easily see going out and training administration to get along with the boards. Why is it always the boards that need to be trained? Why not go out and train administration?

Mueller — *I think if you're going to talk about school board training, we ought to keep talking about it, because we keep electing new people.... This is the way the system works. Now, if you want to change the system, you have to know how it works in order to do that. ...The administration is making some attempts but we also need to train them: 'Hey, administrators, you're in a different cross-cultural situation, these are some of the things that are happening here...they are different from the way you're reading it.' So administrators get an education on one side, the board gets an education on the other side, and the two can get together.*

Carlsson — *I just want to make one point on the word training. I was involved with the Department's minimal action in this area, and I am opposed to the word training because it implies a certain kind of thing. If we used the words orientation or development we wouldn't necessarily mean the same thing. Because I hope that anyone who talks about board training is not really going to go out and put those people in some category--'this is the way it's done in the Establishment, and that's the reason why you ought to do it....'*

Goodwin — *You can approach this business about board training in two obviously different ways. First of all, you can take the educational system and simply try to impose it on that culture.... Or you can establish local control and then pretty much leave it alone, so that they can evolve their own system. That implies an entirely different kind of thing...establish broad guidelines and let them go....*

Mueller — *The problem with that one, Paul, is that you have to deal with state laws. You have to deal with certain things that don't allow them to be let alone to do it for themselves. Maybe we wished they did. ...you've got those kind of laws...Money is funneling out of the legislature and they've got control down there. I don't think that they can completely let everything go.*

Goodwin — *...It is my opinion that they want to do their own thing.*

Carlsson — *Make mistakes and learn from mistakes....*

Peterson — *We are really seeing this occur in the area of building construction right now, where the Department of Public Works won't allow grants to be made to the district without an awful lot of strings attached. In our particular district, we have two facilities being built with a construction cost of about $750,000 and our pound of flesh that we are paying to the Department is $113,000.*

Peterson *Heavens, for $113,000, I think we can make an awful lot of mistakes.*

Bush Caucus

Towarak *I think that communication-wise, the REAAs should get together. You might want to call it a 'bush caucus' of the administrative association statewide.... I think this is something they could get together on, at least to see problems on common terms.*

Mueller *...Now if it* [an organization] *was needed to focus on needs in order to get what the REAAs wanted in the legislature, there may be advantages. But again, I don't think that's the way education ought to be going. That's the way it has gone from the Land Claims to SB 35. If the State Board of Education and the Department of Education are not going to be responsive, and it has to go that way, that's a sad commentary. Districts ought to be able to act on their own and the political part of the legislature ought to be something separate from what's going on in education in the rural area, if we can do that and do a good job.*

Carlsson *I was aware that there was a movement to create something of a bush caucus at the Association of Alaska School Boards. I think many people view the association as a lobbying effort and any creation of a rural/urban split would probably work in the negative sense toward rural Alaska, simply because there isn't all that much parity in the political arena. But as far as gathering together to discuss common problems and resolutions to problems, I suspect that that may well happen and possibly should.*

Teachers: General Comments

Parr *One point that ought to be mentioned about the teachers, at least what I observed, my perception of last year, was the psychological factor. School teachers in District One, which represented all of the Unorganized Borough, had a large professional organization and were able to act very effectively. The setting up of the REAAs has fragmented them into relatively small groups, each one too small to have professional representation, shall we say, and with a great difficulty in communicating. I think there has been a psychological feeling of helplessness created.*

Heine *...The role of a teacher is changing from what we usually think. We usually think of a teacher in the classroom. But when*

Heine — *we have these new delivery systems--computer-assisted instruction and telecommunications and all these other things--the role of the teacher may be changing. Does that then change the qualifications?*

Mueller — *One questions why the teachers are leaving the REAAs in such large numbers, and what can be done to slow and hopefully stop the exodus? I think the question has to be asked by us, 'do we want to stop the exodus?' We* [the REAA Board] *have the views of why the teachers are leaving, particularly after the first year when we didn't select most of them. A lot of teachers got out because they just didn't want to deal with the REAA boards. They didn't want to deal with local control or relate to what people in the local area wanted....*

Teachers: Hire/Fire

Peterson — *One major area that causes me a great deal of professional concern is that of teacher and/or principal-teacher retention. What happens when you get a community that says, 'I don't want that teacher in the community,' and the reason is not an educational reason? You are jeopardizing somebody's job--the ground is shakey.... I am not at all convinced that there is a simple answer to this.... I know of situations where teachers go to a village and they give up a lot of citizenship rights in order to survive as teachers in the village: if that is right or not is tough to answer.*

Orvik — *...If you are responsible for hiring somebody from the very beginning, and you make a decision, your commitment to that individual is much different than if you have no choice or somebody else does the hiring.... If you have neither hire nor fire power, which was the case under the SOS system--virtually, there was no such power, formal power, invested in the advisory school boards--then the only power that the community had over the personnel in the school was an informal method of harrassment over a period of time if they didn't like the teacher...which is a tremendously costly way of doing things. It's costly psychologically; it's costly financially. So I think what we need to look at is the hire/fire power situation and the process that goes along with it. It's not enough to just say, okay, you have hiring power, knowing that you don't have the ability to go out and look for people, interview them and then select from them. But the commitment you would have if you did that would be much different than if you just simply had to wait until you got what you got and then decide*

Orvik — *what you are going to do with that.*

Inouye — *I think there is another side to that which was emphasized at the Association of Alaska School Boards conference last week in Juneau. That was the concern that one board member had about Community School Committees not allowing cohabitation for teachers within their community nor bringing in alcohol. They were wondering to what extent they could make that a condition of hire for any potential teacher; would that be an infringement of the individual's constitutional rights?*

Orvik — *If you are dealing strictly in terms of teaching skills and things that normally would be considered in hiring and firing, that would be one thing. But we are talking about a very gray area between social relationship with the community and the teaching relationship with the classroom. They are much, much fuzzier in a small community....*

Goodwin — *...I feel strongly that some of these social aspects of the problem are equally as important* [as degrees], *and indeed go toward qualifying a teacher as much as their degree does. If they cannot communicate well with the community they are in, then perhaps they should not be there regardless of their qualifications.... The communities don't want to see teachers cohabitating. They don't want to see teachers acting as bad models for their children and so forth. I think those are very legitimate concerns for the parents. My experience is they are very obvious concerns...that work very strongly with the quality of education.*

Mueller — *Our board is taking just an opposite attack on teacher hire than it has on curriculum, in that we must get a recommendation from the Community School Committee.... The administration hasn't liked it at all because it's said, 'what control do we have then?' There is always this big question, where is the Community School Committee's role in relationship to the principal teacher in the school? in relationship to the REAA board? in relationship to the superintendent? What's the line of authority?*

The case study points out that the normal qualifications that we usually hire a teacher on, the administration hires on, are not at all the things that are necessary for a teacher to be effective in our communities. And we are now trying to nail some of those down and have them listed as qualifications so we are not discriminating. But we have more things than academic qualifications that we are looking for in a teacher. This whole thing of cohabitation, of using drugs, of teachers doing a lot of swearing around

Mueller — *the school, these are vital concerns in our communities, yet legally where do they stand? And you probably won't see the comments recorded in the board minutes because people know that they don't stand anywhere.*

Teacher Certification

Heine — *...there is an acknowledged need to overhaul the statewide certification/recertification regulations. We have a lot of complex questions to resolve and when we get through that, I'm sure of two things. One is that they are going to be much better than they are now. And secondly, they are not going to be perfect.*

Darnell — *There does seem to be somewhat of a dichotomy developing... the difference between the extent to which the state prescribes, that being a very broad licensing authority, and the qualifications decided at a local level.*

Alter — *...NEA is saying that we feel we want to have some statewide requirements that all teachers should have. If you want to go beyond that or have more specific criteria, then those are the functions of local districts when they hire teachers.*

Darnell — *NEA doesn't find that...concept alien to their purposes, [that of] having refinements defined at the local level?*

Alter — *You have some statewide certification standards. Beyond that, it's decisions that are locally made as those districts hire the teachers. If they want a teacher who has some kind of particular skills beyond the certification standards, that's what is put in the job description when they advertise for a teacher.*

Goodwin — *I think there is a problem, though...in regard to the rural communities. ...on the one hand, you would have certified teachers with master's degrees teaching students one thing or another, and then you would have a group of traditional Natives who aren't certified, teaching skin sewing classes and/or that sort of cultural-oriented classes. We ran into a great big certification hassle because of this particular group of teachers who weren't 'qualified.' Some allowance has to be made in those base standards that NEA is advocating. They should not disqualify people like that from teaching. They have valuable contributions to make that no other persons can make. The Ph.D.s, B.A.s, etc., can't make that contribution, only <u>those</u> people can.*

Peterson — *We took essentially the same approach that you suggest, that if a person has a particular skill, i.e., the language and culture,*

Peterson *and they are performing the role of a teacher, then they should be paid a teacher's salary. But we're finding that that isn't exactly working.*

Goodwin *Doesn't work?*

Peterson *There's a lot more to the teaching process than just the knowledge. ...control of the class on the secondary level is a real problem for people who haven't had the background in techniques. So we are trying, of course, to improve that by giving them some of these skills and techniques*

Goodwin *I agree.... What I am suggesting, however, is that whatever teacher certification scheme is finally drawn up in this state, it has to make allowances for the recognized experts in the local community.*

Federal/State Controversy and Bilingual Education

Carlsson *What we are talking about is the controversy between the federal government and the state representatives on the enforcement of certain laws. Bilingual education happens to be part of that. However, I don't think bilingual education is necessarily a controversial topic. In fact, from the state's point of view, after going out with public hearings over the past three months, we found an overwhelmingly positive desire for the bilingual approach to educate the children in the state....*

I believe a fundamental question...is, what effects will federal education policies have on development in Alaska, particularly local control? Many of us who are involved in the movement for local control, the drafting of SB 35, the implementation of that in the state, did not foresee this sort of thing happening.... Federal education policies don't necessarily work in support of the development. I think that has been obvious to many of us who have dealt with developments in rural Alaska. We have seen the first major attempt by an enforcement arm of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in Alaska. I don't anticipate it's going to be the last attempt to enforce the laws of the federal government. We need to look at ways so that the enforcement role will work in support of what is going on in Alaska.

Orvik *Sylvia, as long as you are talking about the causal relationship between bilingual education and local control, I think you seriously have to leave the question open of which caused which. The way things are going now, we could almost just as well say*

Orvik — *that bilingual education, up to this point, has caused local control and has been used as a cause for getting local control. It's the one concrete thing that people can point at and say, 'This is what we want, and this is why we want local control.' There is a good deal of evidence, now that local control has been initiated, that people aren't as enthusiastic about bilingual education so much as they were enthusiastic about local control.*

BIA Schools: Transfer and Contracting

Brady — *This last year there was only one school transferred over and that was Mountain Village in the Lower Yukon School District. We are, in lieu of the agreements with the State Department, ready to negotiate with the REAAs for school transfers within the guidelines the BIA Area Director has laid down, which is that they take the school 'as is, where is.' That's the Area Director's request. We then negotiate on any programs that may have to be dropped because of inadequate financing.... Another point is that the tribal governing body of the village where the school is located concurs in a resolution, that they would agree that the school be transferred from the Bureau to the particular school district.... It appears at this point in the discussion that there probably won't be any transfers this year. We have not heard of any school districts with BIA schools that are requesting transfers.*

Carlsson — *Bill, is there any discussion or movement for contracting the schools now, in light of the second year of REAA operation? That's a possibility under P.L. 93-638* [Indian Self-Determination Act].

Brady — *Right. There are other options available to our school communities besides joining the REAAs. One is to contract with the Bureau directly for local control; ...it could be at the Bureau level or it could be at the more local or village level.... Because of the authority of the state for education and the relationship with the Bureau,* [there's] *always been a question mark about contracting. But the Area Director has gone on record that if a request was made by a tribal group with proper credentials, he would contract the school with that group. Then, if a resolution came from a tribal governing body requesting that the school be turned over to the REAAs, he would curtail that contract and transfer the school to the public school system. That's the way he envisions meeting both the mandates of P.L. 93-638 and our agreement with the state to transfer schools as requested.*

Carlsson — *One more question, Bill. Who does your office recognize as the tribal governing body?*

Brady — *We have a priority list of tribal governing bodies.... It starts at the village level and works up to the regional. Then, if neither one of those are involved, we can go to the profit corporation at the regional level. Discussions are being held on that now which can really change the situation. Senators Gravel's and Steven's legislation to change the definition of tribal governing body in Alaska, if that is upheld, has great ramifications for the Bureau and how we carry out our contracts. If the tribal governing status is given to the regional groups rather than the village groups, then the contract would not take a resolution from the village but only a resolution from the regional group to contract all schools in that region.... They* [the federal government] *just held hearings and as far as we know, our people indicate that the hearings were negative to the regional tribal governing bodies. The village people just did not want to give the tribal governing body status to the region. But again, that remains to be seen, how it comes out.*

Waddell — *Bill, did you hear any discussion on the 'retrocession' issue as far as Forrest Gerard is concerned?*

Brady — *The new Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs of the Department of Interior* [Forrest Gerard] *requested that the Area Director's position allow for the right of a previously operated BIA school to revert back from the public school system if the community served so desires. In all of our agreements with the state we (at least those of us involved in the Juneau area) have always felt that once a school has transferred it was a one-way street. He* [Gerard] *is new to Alaska and I'm sure he was made aware that we have a unique situation compared to schools in the States where their public schools operate on reservations. Situations like that are much different.**

BIA Schools: Future Considerations

Brady — *Due to the Hootch case settlement, the state is requesting permits to build schools on our sites, as it is the only available land in some villages where you could put a school.... At the*

*This issue has since been resolved: once a BIA school has transferred to a REAA, there is no provision included for its reentering the federal system.

Brady *planning stage, it's fine; construction, it's fine. But we're all looking forward to when we have two school boards, two different agencies running schools built together, sharing lunch rooms, invoicing one another for utilities, different calendars.... And I think that this will hasten the transition problem, once the village council and school board say, 'Wait a minute now, there must be a better way'...it won't be the Bureau operating state schools.*

Darnell *Actually, the advent of secondary schools from Hootch settlements have reversed the historical trend, where the last time there were two schools from different agencies in the same community was ten years ago--Northway.*

Brady *...at Akiak, we were operating a 1931-vintage school, well maintained, at least we think so. It doesn't meet state codes today. I'm sure it did in 1931.... The village is growing, it's crowded. Through the political process, they opted for a new school, through the Bureau and the state. At that point, we met with the state and decided who could get building construction money faster: they could. At the same time, unknown to both groups, Senator Stevens got a supplemental appropriation through the Bureau for $180,000 to design a new school. We waived our construction, and let the state go ahead--that was SOS and now it's the [REAA] school district. They are letting a bid. The Bureau finally diverted the $180,000 to the state and they decided to build a new grade/high school combination, adjoining our elementary school. They assumed that immediately after they completed their grade school, we would shut ours down. But now we're tied in with the Self-Determination Act, and it's up to the village council to decide whether they want us to continue to run our school. At this time next year we'll be faced with this.*

Not only that, but many REAAs that don't have BIA schools are operating schools under use permits from the Bureau, where we couldn't transfer because of Land Claims settlement problems of title.... As far as we know, the BIA still owns those schools.... The ramifications are worth looking at. We're trying to transfer them over but a lot of times the school in the area isn't there anymore. They tore it down and replaced it with a new one. We still own the one they tore down.... I think all of this will help focus on one school system.

Discussion and Suggestions for the Report

Peterson *The only thing I don't see on this* [outline of the chapter on analysis of REAA Board minutes], *and I'm not quite sure where*

Peterson — *it fits in, is the whole ball park of trying to put small high schools into all of these communities. There are ramifications that just won't quit. How do you have a curriculum for three kids? And we are doing it all over the state.*

Inouye — *There are very few things recorded like that in the minutes. ...I think it's interesting to observe that whenever you talk about small high schools that it's very seldom on the curriculum offerings, the student basis--rather it's 'what is it going to cost and how are we going to get it there?' And what's the housing for the teachers going to be like?*

Peterson — *That's the type of thing that comes up in board meetings.*

Darnell — *...Actually, what isn't there is sometimes just as significant as what is and the analysis should address that. Obviously, if you are analyzing minutes which come from afar and they are analyzed in an atmosphere alien to that from which they were generated, it's dangerous to read between the lines. You have to be very careful that what is reported is direct and straightforward. It's also obvious...that those things that ought to be read between the lines are hard to get a hold of.*

Peterson — *I think there's something that needs to be addressed...the administrative problems as seen from the Department of Education level. There were a number that existed during this first year-and-a-half. Many times, those of us involved in the district are too close to the problem; we need somebody from perhaps the Department level to address what were the major administrative and organizational problems.*

Parr — *I thought maybe there was not sufficient weight given to one factor and that is that the Ninth Legislature* was an extremely liberal legislature....*

Mueller — *Contracted services is an area that I think a lot of boards look at--the fact that many of them had the same legal counsel, same bookkeeping services, or check writing services. You look at it and what choice do you have, that is about what it amounts to. Recently, we considered changing legal counsel and we couldn't find other legal counsel in the state that knew much about edu-*

*The Ninth Legislature passed SB 35.

Mueller *cation.... I'd like to see those kinds of things highlighted....*

Peterson *I had suggestions for Dean's finance chapter and one of those dealt with hot lunch. Hot lunch, I don't know about other districts, but hot lunch has been our hot potato.*

Carlsson *It seems to me that one of the things that would perhaps help round out a report like this or some report in the future is perspective of rural Alaska Native persons on this whole change.*

Timing of the Report

Darnell *Have things in the report...indicated it's time to consider amending the original legislation? I think the sense of timing has troubled us, even in making this kind of study. If you wait too long, those things that maybe were problems have become institutionalized. If you go into it too soon, there is the likelihood that you are begging some questions that need not be asked, that will ultimately work their way out.*

Carlsson *Frank, it seems to me that those of us who have been involved in the whole process over a number of years really need this* [report] *to be able to sit back and think about what is actually happening, the changes that have taken place.... This provides that kind of opportunity, to reflect on what has happened, each step of the way. I think the timing is really great....*

Suggestions for Changes in the Legislation

Peterson *I would just like to comment on three areas. We have a building under 'use permit.' However, the control or ownership of the building remains with the state. This area of who is responsible for 'major maintenance' and what is major maintenance and what isn't major maintenance is an area that may not necessitate legislation but is an area* [in need] *of real examination.*

The second area that may need legislative scrutiny is the role of the Community School Committees. Perhaps it needs to be better spelled out. I think each district has sort of worked out a role that perhaps needs examination.

The third area is funding bilingual education, depending on how you define bilingual....

Recall

Heine — *My personal feeling is that the role of the Commissioner and of the State Board in terms of recall is awkward--[the Commissioner] serving the place of clerk, and the Board, of the borough assembly--that we should sit in that sort of role, with these people who are elected to the REAAs. There's another problem, too. That is, when the legislature passed the statute...they didn't change the times that would be applicable.... In this case, you have a community way out here, the city clerk in Juneau, and the assembly scattered all over the state of Alaska, which is not even operating in the same time zones. I don't like the role to start with, but if the role has to be there, I think that the time is unfair. I really don't feel that the Commissioner or State Board should be playing those parts. I'm not saying how it should be done, but there must be a better way.*

Mueller — *It seems to me...they can bring a person to recall on completely false charges, and the charges make no difference. That's pretty much what happened in the Railbelt area. It wasn't the point of what people said about them, it was the point of whether they wanted to recall them or not. Here was a case where the teachers influenced the community that brought about the recall, because the teachers weren't getting what they wanted in bargaining. They could only recall three people; the whole board had taken the action. So they picked three members out of the board and recalled them. It looks like there's something wrong with the recall system....*

Election Process

Mueller — *The election process being handled by the state election office just turned into a fallacy in our district during the October election. The information just didn't get down to a local level and yet the REAA board and the district were supposed to more or less keep their hands off. And so we did. As a result, people didn't know the procedure they ought to be going through to file, because the procedure was very foreign to them.. The whole idea of having to go around and get fifteen signatures in order to be on a ballot...well, in three of our villages, nobody filed for a seat, as a result of the process. Normally, people would have just submitted their names, maybe on a sheet of paper saying, 'I'm willing to run for the seat.' Maybe some more research ought to see if over rural Alaska, it is a problem.*

Related to that, two of the people who ran were employees of

Mueller *the school district, and may or may not have known...that they couldn't be on the board and be an employee at the same time. ...And I think that ought to be looked at. We see the problems of conflict of interest, of being on the board and being an employee of the board, but when you start taking small areas, where your resources are really limited, you need the person in both places.*

Another thing in the election process is the way the seats were set up after those hearings. We ran into it right off in our area. We have two cultural areas and yet one seat included five villages. The minority cultural area downriver, which had two villages out of the five, didn't have a chance district-wide of getting anybody elected. So the board didn't represent that area. We appointed an associate member, who didn't have the right to vote but at least who could express an opinion, to try to bring about that balance.

Chanar *I was talking to somebody from the Northwest area, and I think as far as the election goes, the timing is really bad. When the time came for the people to sign up, these people were out there hunting, so come time for the election, there were people running unopposed because others didn't meet the deadline to run for these seats.*

Suggestions for Further Study

Other Systems

Carlsson *As far as the local control issue is concerned, it seems to me that it would be worthwhile to examine local control in other areas and other systems, for instance the bush justice system.... I think one of the things that probably is going to become very clear--that many people in particular look at local control as the way they have of maintaining the life style, language and culture.*

Mueller *Each time I hear local control, I have been weighing, what does that mean? Does that mean Community School Committee control? at the village level? at the regional level?--what does local mean? Sylvia then suggested looking at* [systems] *other than schools. I also thought about Native non-profit corporations, how do they handle local control, what do they do with health? ...I wonder if it might not be pushing it too far when we say Community School Committees ought to make their own decisions and the REAAs rubber stamp them. The answer that administra-*

Mueller *tors and REAA boards have all been looking for might be helped if we look at a number of the other systems.*

Rule Making

Carlsson *...the whole idea of rule making in this state certainly doesn't take into account the unique aspects of rural Alaska. I think overall there is a need in the state to take a look at that whole process. On the one hand, to change it perhaps, because we know, for instance, that the Administrative Procedures Act is probably very difficult, even for people in urban Alaska to work with, let alone the people in rural Alaska. Also, the Act itself was created a long time before the major developments that we're seeing now were even considered. There's probably a need to change those kinds of things.*

On the other hand, people who in the past have not worked with this aspect of government need to understand it and to recognize that there are ways of influencing it, too.

Pressure Groups

Horton *When you are talking about the further need for other studies, I'm wondering about the pressure groups...what role* [teachers] *play, and possibly what roles the corporations are playing...I know it is difficult to get that information out, but I am sure it affects what happens.*

Quality of Education

Carlsson *The quality of education has been mentioned several times, but I don't think that it is really considered to be an issue right now. Most particularly, whether or not there would be studies to find out how this change in the education delivery system has affected the quality of education. I suspect that it would be very difficult to even address that now.... It seems to me in the future that is the aspect that we have to look at very closely, not only from the perspective of the people who reside in rural Alaska, but all of us who are involved in some aspect of the education delivery system. That has to be the overriding concern.*

The Reporting Process

Mueller *I am hoping this report is satisfactory enough to rural Alaska, so that they make use of it.*

Darnell — *...because reports just are not acceptable devices for disseminating information--regardless of their sources.*

Carlsson — *I would like to see some fundamental questions raised in a manner which will cause people to begin thinking and discussing these kinds of things, particularly in rural Alaska. Some of that happened prior to the passage of SB 35, largely because of what CNER did. I think that somehow you have found a way of causing this to happen. I'd like to see it happen again. Question of 'What are the REAAs and how long will they be around?' ...I certainly think that those kinds of questions have got to be discussed, not only by the school board members themselves but by the general public.*

Darnell — *That mechanism in that report* [Prehigher Education in the Unorganized Borough] *is really the exception to the history of most efforts along that line, and of course, a lot of factors came together at the same time.... If present conditions were to reach a place where there would be problems to that extent, then that process could be reinitiated. It wasn't an accidental thing, it really was a special process...and it is very expensive. You know that first CNER* [Unorganized Borough] *report? I have to comment that some legislators said, 'You know, this is the best bargain we ever got, we only paid $5,000 for this and look what it has led to.' Well, it so happened that Legislative Affairs contributed $5,000, but the Ford Foundation contributed $250,000!*

Hecht — *One of the things I find so different in this report from the earlier one is that in that first report, although the process took a year or two to put together, there was one issue. When we stop to think of it now, there are 21 different cases. Within each of the REAAs, there are different issues.... One of the hardest things to grapple with here is what we really need is 21 case studies.*

Inouye — *Dick, I wonder if you have any specific ideas on formatting a report so that it would be more conducive for people to read?*

Mueller — *I don't think a written report on its own, no matter how it is formatted, is going to do it, unless there are some other media that draw people into it. I mentioned satellite TV which I think is a good possibility. But surely you couldn't cover the whole report on TV.... But maybe a few short programs, video taped, that would be available for satellite TV and for school districts to show at community school committee meetings. I think a lot of districts would be open to this idea, as a jumping-off point to the publication.*

Inouye *I would be curious if use of the Tundra Times or publications like that would seem to have a high readership out in REAA areas?*

Mueller *My impression is that is also a good way. If you get information in Tundra Times--'Here is a publication on REAA school districts and what's happened in the first year'--lots of rural area people, particularly the leaders, are going to know about it.*

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Kathryn A. Hecht and Ronald K. Inouye

The story of the 21 Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAAs) is just beginning. In this report we have:

described the first year of the REAAs as an historic event in the evolving history of education in rural Alaska

emphasized the progress made since the Pre-higher Education in the Unorganized Borough report was issued in 1974

analyzed survey and other data concerning the implementation of the new districts

presented the papers from others studying special aspects of the development of the REAAs, and

included the participants' edited comments from a seminar held to discuss issues raised in the report and to identify issues needing further study.

We hope the report will document the first year of the REAAs as an important Alaskan educational event, serve as the basis for further discussion of issues and suggestions for improvements, and provide an incentive for further study and information sharing.

APPENDIX A: REAA SURVEY QUESTIONS

The following questions were used to make up the questionnaires sent to REAA superintendents and chairpersons in June 1976, with the accompanying letter. The codes in the upper right hand corner of each page indicate who was asked to respond to the question.

Question Code
S - Superintendent
C - Chairperson of REAA Board
M - Member of REAA Board (to be answered individually)
B - Board (to be answered by the REAA Board as a whole)

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA
FAIRBANKS ALASKA 99701

June 13, 1977

Dear Superintendent/REAA School Board Chairperson:

You will remember from previous correspondence, The Center for Northern Educational Research (CNER) is doing a study to follow-up the effects of SB35 and the creation of the REAA system. It has been one year since the REAA boards officially assumed control of education in their regions and we feel now is an appropriate time to reflect on this experience. I hope that the enclosed questionnaires will provide you and your board members with an opportunity to examine the progress and problems of the past year as well as supply us with information to form a statewide picture to be shared with all concerned.

Enclosed you will find three questionnaires:

#1 A questionnaire for the Superintendent to fill out;

#2 A questionnaire for the Board Chairperson to fill out (there are several opinion-type questions starred, where the chairperson may, if he/she wishes, consult with Board members);

#3 A questionnaire in two parts for all REAA board members, (including the Chairperson), to be filled out at a board meeting. Part I includes five questions for each board member to fill out individually. Part II includes two questions that we would like the board as a whole to consider and respond to.

We have field-tested these forms in a draft version with one REAA district board and superintendent and have had them reviewed by staff of the Department of Education. Their comments were helpful in revising the questionnaires.

We have purposely kept the questions to be answered during a Board meeting at a minimum to take up as little meeting time as possible. From the field-test experience, it appears best to consider the questionnaire early in the agenda, when people are fresh. If, in your REAA, English is not the primary language of all members of your board, the Chairperson might wish to read the questions aloud and make provisions for recording responses.

The analysis of the responses we receive from each REAA will become part of a Center report, to be ready by late fall this year. CNER is cooperating with the Department of Education, the Department of Community and Regional Affairs, and several individuals (for example, Susan Horton and her study of Community School Committees) in writing this report in order to produce a comprehensive overview of the subject and to highlight areas in need of continued study.

No REAA will be quoted in the report by name but we will use comments, rather than just report numbers, to capture the differences among REAAs as well as the similarities. You will of course receive copies of the report when completed.

Once your REAA has completed all questionnaires, please feel free to discuss your responses with the Board and each other. You might wish to keep a copy of your responses for your own files--perhaps to do your own follow-up next year.

I would appreciate receiving the completed questionnaires by August 1. If you have any questions, please feel free to call or write to me, Ron Inouye or Frank Darnell at CNER.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kathryn A. Hecht, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
Center for Northern
Educational Research
479-7173 or 479-7143

KAH:ds

Enclosures

Special Topics

S C

Does your REAA have a specific position, opinions or interests related to the below listed topics--if yes, please briefly describe. Positive as well as negative comments are encouraged.

BIA Schools

Bilingual/Bicultural programs

State regulations/hearings

Certification

Village high schools

Regional Resource Centers

Federal programs

Curriculum planning

Fiscal resources

Student travel

Board travel

Municipal Development

Local Control and Government

S M

1. How effective do you feel SB 35 and the creation of REAAs have been in bringing local control of schools to rural Alaska?

2. Given your experience in local control of schools, has your interest in local government (municipal: borough or city):

   _____ increased

   _____ decreased

   _____ stayed about the same

   _____ no opinion

   Please explain:

Assistance to REAA

S C

1. During your first year of operation, what types of assistance and in what areas has your REAA received from DOE (other than board training already noted)?

2. Has your REAA requested any type of assistance from DOE that has not been received? Yes _____ No _____

   If yes, please explain:

3. Has your REAA received assistance (contracted or at no cost) from any other source than DOE? Yes _____ No _____

   If yes, please list:

Type of Assistance	Group Providing	Satisfactory Yes	Satisfactory No

*4. Are there any services currently unavailable that you feel your REAA needs now or in the future? Yes _____ No _____

   If yes, please list:

200

Community School Committees (CSC)

S C

1. How many CSCs are there in your REAA? _____
2. Of those, how many meet regularly? _____
3. Do you regularly receive minutes from these CSCs? Yes, from all _____
   Yes, from some _____
   No, from none _____
4. Do you send your REAA board meeting minutes to the CSCs? Yes _____ No _____
   To anyone else in the communities? Yes _____ No _____
   To whom?
5. Does your REAA have a written policy concerning the functions and duties of the CSCs? Yes _____ No _____
   If yes, please attach.
6. Have training sessions been held for your CSCs? Yes, for all _____
   If yes, please describe: Yes, for some _____
   No, for none _____
7. Does your REAA Board receive much input from the CSCs? Yes, from all _____
   If yes, on what types of issues and how? Yes, from some _____
   No, from none _____

* 8. Overall, how would you judge your relationships with the CSCs to have been this past year?

   _____ excellent Comments: _____
   _____ fair _____
   _____ poor _____
   _____ hopeless _____

* 9. Do you see a need for Community School Committees? Why or why not?

201

Decision Making

S C

Please check (✓) who usually makes dicisions in the areas listed below. If decisions are made by more than one of the groups listed across the top, double check (✓✓) the group with primarily decision making responsibility.

DECISION AREAS \ DECISION MAKERS	REAA Board	District Administration	Community School Committees	Principal/ Principal-Teachers	Teachers	Other (Specify)
Budget						
Curriculum						
Elementary						
Course offerings						
Course content						
Text book selection						
Secondary						
Course offerings						
Course content						
Text book selection						
Facilities						
Scheduling						
Construction plans						
Federal Programs						
Proposal initiation						
Proposal approval						
Program evaluation						
Personnel						
Hire/Fire						
Administrators						
Teachers						
Other						
Evaluate						
Administrators						
Teachers						
Others						
Student Affairs						
Rights and responsibilities						
Activities						
Travel						
Other						

Decision Referrals

S C

*1. Give examples of topics your Board refers to your district administrator for decision:

2. Give examples of topics your district administrator brings before your board:

*3. Give examples of topics your Board refers to your community school committees to decide for themselves :

*4. Give examples of topics your community school committees refer to your Board to decide:

Origin of REAA Board Business

S C

Estimate what proportion of business that comes before REAA Board originates with:

REAA Board Chairperson ____

Other Board Members ____

REAA Central Administration ____

REAA Principals and Principal-Teachers ____

REAA Teachers ____

Community School Committees ____

Parents ____

Students ____

General Public ____

State Dept. of Education ____

State Dept. of Public Works ____

Other ____

____

____

= 100%

Distribution of REAA Board Time by Subject

S C

SUBJECT:	Approximately what proportion of Board time was spent on:*	Ideally what proportion of Board time should be spent on:*
Budget		
Curriculum		
Facilities planning		
Federal programs		
Federal regulations		
Operation & maintenance		
Personnel		
State regulations		
Student concerns		
Teacher negotiations		
Other:		
*This should include committee work	=100%	=100%

Comments:

REAA Issues

Given the background discussions which led to SB 35 and considering the issues/problems which came up in your REAA this past year (since it was organized), which issues were:

(Please list up to three for each category where applicable)

anticipated/resolved:

1.

2.

3.

unanticipated/resolved

1.

2.

3.

anticipated/unresolved

1.

2.

3.

unanticipated/unresolved

1.

2.

3.

SB 35

Given your experience as superintendent, please think back on Senate Bill 35 and the new REAA system and list what you feel are:

(a) its most positive features

(b) things which need to be changed

Examples of REAA Board Action

S M

From your experience with the REAA Board, please describe two examples:

No.1 One where the Board acted effectively when confronted with a major problem or issue

and

No.2 One where the Board either did not act effectively or failed to take action when confronted with a major problem or issue

For each, describe:

(a) What conditions led up to this situation?

(b) What action was (or was not) taken?

(c) How did this effect the situation?

Example No. 1

(a)

(b)

(c)

Example No. 2

(a)

(b)

(c)

REAA Board Characteristics

C

1. How many people serve on your REAA Board? ____

   a. Female ____ Male ____
   b. Native ____ Non-Native ____
   c. How many were previously members of the local Advisory Board to ASOSS? ____
   d. How many were previously members of the local Advisory Board to BIA? ____
   e. How many different communities do the Board members come from? ____
   f. Does your Board have a student representative? Yes ____ No ____
      If yes: Does the student have a vote? ____
      If yes: How is the student chosen? _____
   g. Does your Board have any associate members? Yes____ No ____
      If yes, please describe:

2. What is the current occupation of each member? (fill in number of each)

Clerical	Home-maker	Professional	Self employed	Skilled Laborer	Subsistance	Unskilled Laborer

3. Do you, the chairperson, sit on any other (non-REAA) community or statewide committees or advisory boards? Yes ____ No ____

   If yes, please list:

   _____ _____
   _____ _____
   _____ _____
   _____ _____

   If you are also chairperson of any of the above listed, please check (✓)

REAA Board Meeting

C

1. The location of REAA board meetings:

   ____ varies

   ____ is always in the same place

   Comments: _____

   Does cost affect this decision? Yes ____ No ____

2. What type of expenses or compensation, if any, is paid to REAA board members to attend meetings?

3. Which of the following, if any, affect public attendence at REAA Board meetings?

   ____ Location: _____

   ____ Issues to be discussed: (Do any particular topics draw high or low audiences?)

   High: _____ Low: _____

   ____ Other: _____

Training of REAA Board Members

C

1. What training did your REAA Board members experience? -- Please briefly describe:

Topic (Example: teacher negotiation)	Group Providing Training	Location	No. of Board members from your REAA attending	Method			Evaluation		
				Conference	Workshop	Visiting Expert	Excellent	Good	Poor

* 2 Can you identify training needs for your REAA Board that have been met and others which have not:

Met Training Needs	Unmet Training Needs

1. What do you enjoy most about being an REAA Board member?

2. What do you dislike?

3. Do you believe serving on the Board is worth the time spent on it?

4. What advice would you give a new REAA Board member?

5. Do you intend to run for another term? Why or why not?

Given your experience as board members, please think back on Senate Bill 35 and the new REAA system and list what you feel are:

(a) its most positive features

(b) things which need to be changed

REAA Board Accomplishments

B

After one year of operation as an REAA, what does your Board feel are its:

a. Most meaningful accomplishments

b. Most significant problems

Priority Concerns

B

Looking ahead, please list the high priority concerns of your REAA board for next year: (they need not be in order of importance)

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

APPENDIX B

REAAs IN THE NEWS:

YEAR ONE

(July 76 - July 77)

RURAL ALASKA GETS LOCAL CONTROL OF SCHOOLS

By Jo Anne Wold

This week in the 21 newly created school districts across the state of Alaska from Angoon to Kotzebue, and from Adak to Bethel, school doors opened for the first time under local authority, classes began under local superintendents, with locally hired teachers, and under the direction of a locally elected school board.

The great decentralization, as well as the dismantling of the State Operated Schools (SOS), has occurred, and the era of Regional Education Attendance Areas (REAA) is underway.

No longer will village schools be dictated to by a state board and state superintendents. Area school boards will now make their own decisions on curriculum, development, teacher recruiting and the use of educational funds.

This transition from an appointed state board to locally elected school boards was the largest such undertaking in the history of the United States, according to officials of the State Board of Education in Juneau.

Dr. Marshall Lind, commissioner of education, said he would work very closely with the new boards. "We will provide whatever assistance we can," he said. "But we do not want to get in their way."

The Alaska constitution provides that every village with eight elementary age children must have a school, and that rural areas meeting the pupil requirement have the option of setting up their own secondary school.

This fall 15 villages will have a high school for the first time. Some high schools, such as Angoon where 55 students are enrolled, will have a full secondary school, while other villages, such as Greyling, will have one high school teacher offering supervised study or correspondence courses.

All-Alaska Weekly, September 10, 1976

AFN cites education problems

By JEANNE ABBOTT
Daily News Staff Writer

Less than two years after State-Operated Schools (SOS) were decentralized by the Alaska Legislature, the new rural school districts are finding unforeseen problems of organization. Native leaders at the Alaska Federation of Natives convention Friday spelled out such problems as substandard schools, limited budgets and social impact on village communities.

The decentralization of SOS created 21 rural education attendance areas (REAA) throughout Alaska to provide bush areas with local control over their schools.

"IT'S TRUE, WE do have local control over our schools and are practicing self determination," said Bob Clark of Dillingham.

"It's finally our system, and we have a hand in our own education. It's a milestone within the Native Alaska movement," said Bob Schaeffer of Kotzebue.

But, both Clark and Schaeffer pointed to a number of problems that have arisen during the past year as new school districts were forming:

—THE NEW DISTRICTS are taking over "substandard" Bureau of Indian Education schools. "These are schools the bureau has always resisted bringing up to par," Schaeffer said.

—The 21 new administrations have been expensive to put together and Schaeffer indicated all regions have budget deficits.

—More thought needed to be given to the impact on communities, when children who would normally attend school elsewhere will be educated at home, Clark said. "Do we have enough food? Will it mean more welfare?" he asked.

ADN 10/23/76

—THE NATIVE CULTURE needs to be instituted in the schools. "We need to develop a system a lot more flexible," said Clark.

—"The state would dearly love to make the REAAs into boroughs so they can be taxed. We're not taxed now, but if we're not careful, we will be," Clark said.

Since spring of 1975, the new rural districts have been organizing their administrations.

"The regional attendance areas are basically organized. It's time to deal with the thrust of the bill," Schaeffer said.

Anchorage Daily News, Friday, December 3, 1976

ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

Our views:

State schools

True to the intention of the celebrated Molly Hootch case, which directed the state to provide high school education within rural villages, plans are proceeding to do so with all due speed.

We are pleased to see the state Department of Education moving with the necessary dispatch to fulfill the court settlement. Since a $59 million bond issue for state schools was passed in the Nov. 2 election, the department has laid elaborate groundwork in preparation for construction. Most projects authorized by the bond will be under way during 1977, and many projects are expected to be completed by 1978.

So far, the department indicates that 20 to 30 new buildings, either kindergarten to 12th grade or grades 9 to 12, will be started next year. Additions will be made to approximately 20 other structures for secondary programs; 20 more will be upgraded to meet fire, safety and health codes. In all, that means 70 to 80 projects are already planned to serve bush students.

continued

Anchorage Daily News
State schools...

Not only is the department moving rapidly toward this construction, but it seems to be making every effort to get the local communities involved in how the schools should be built.

The establishment of 21 new rural school districts last year has made a big difference in the department's approach to the projects.

This month there will be a workshop in Anchorage for school boards, about 70 people, to train them in developing educational specifications. Out in the communities, staff from the Department of Education is helping districts with plans for programs and building design.

Meanwhile, the Department of Public Works has already hired site investigation teams in some districts to do surveys and make soil tests. The department is now advertising for architects, and hopes to coordinate district projects with an organized process of selection.

But here too, the local communities are able to get involved. Recent legislation provides that individual districts may administer school construction through a grant program if it does not want the Department of Public Works to have the responsibility. Districts using this option can select their own architects, and monitor their own construction projects.

It all means that local people will have a major say in where and how the local schools will be built. And, we are hopeful this will result in new buildings that are better fit to serve Alaska's villages.

TUNDRA DRUMS January 22, 1977

TOK-SOOK ANGRY AT REAA TAKE-OVER

By Janet Shantz

A decision by the Lower Kuskokwim School District to take over the Toksook Bay BIA-operated school has caused widespread dissatisfaction in that community. People there say they don't want the LKSD.

In a letter to Al Weinberg, superintendent of the LKSD, and Joerene Hout, LKSD Board Chairperson, the Toksook Bay school board wrote that "every adult in this village opposes the transfer of the elementary school from the BIA to the State." The letter was signed by 100 villagers.

One of the villagers biggest complaints is that they were not consulted before the takeover decision was made. That decision came at the LKSD's November meeting in Platinum, where the board adopted the policy "that the District will assume the operation of BIA elementary schools in each village where a district-operated high school program is established."

Weinberg agreed that people are upset about the way the decision was made. But, according to him, it would have been difficult to have done it any other way. At the time the takeover decision was made, he said, they were under pressure from the Department of Education and plaintiffs in the Hootch case to get the construction phase of secondary programs under way. He said construction decisions could not be made without knowing who was going to operate the elementary schools. At the same time, the BIA in Juneau told the LKSD that they had to know by January first which schools the LKSD was going to take over in 1977-78. Weinberg said those deadlines gave the LKSD no time to publicize the takeover. He added, "I suppose we could have done more, but we didn't."

When the village learned of the takeover decision, they wrote in a December 17 letter to Weinberg and Hout that they didn't want the LKSD to take over the BIA school for these reasons;

"1. We find operation of the

continued

Tundra Drums

Toksook angry...

TUNDRA DRUMS January 22, 1977

BIA school here to be superior to the operation of the state high school.

A. The food program is better. The children receive more, and do not have to pay for it. Many times the family cannot afford to pay for the food the high school charges for.

B. We do not see the high school to be as equipped as the BIA school The high school has many expensive items that cannot be used, but the BIA school has more books for our children.

C. The BIA has and uses more full-time teacher aides from our village. This makes the BIA pupil-teacher ratio as good, if not better, than the state high schools.

2. We are very disturbed by your statements that the reason for LKSD take-over of the BIA 7th and 8th grades was for money reasons. We are concerned about our childrens education, not how much money you of the LKSD can get by counting our childrens heads.

3. If the state takes over the BIA elementary school, we are afraid there will be less money to keep our teacher-aides and cook with a job..."

Other letters were written to Hout and Weinberg asking that the LKSD decision be reconsidered. None of the letters were answered until January 6 because they both had gone out of town for about a month.

During that time, the frustrations of the Toksook people grew. They called a meeting of the five United Villages of Toksook on January 8, and specifically invited Hout to come to that meeting and answer their questions. Because she was still out of town, Richard Hazen, business manager of the LKSD, went in her place. The villagers there say he gave them no definite answers, and that sending no one would have been better than sending someone who could not give them answers. Hazen said that he "gave them as definite answers as he could."

The people of Toksook are under the impression that the lunch program that is now provided free in the BIA school, would cost them when the LKSD takes over. Weinberg said that low income families have never had to pay for lunch. "In all of the (LKSD) village schools, every student qualifies for free lunch except boarding students. And boarding students are given their lunch money by the school district." He said that the meal that the LKSD provides is a "Type B" lunch which does not differ significantly from the Type A lunch that the BIA provides. And he said local community school committees would have the option of upgrading that lunch with the budget that they are given.

Weinberg said that reasons for taking over elementary schools in villages where there is an LKSD secondary program is to achieve economies of scale. When a school system is under one organization space can be shared, as well as equipment and personnel. There would be no need to duplicate expensive facilities such as water and sewer systems. And he said that the transition between elementary and high school would be smoother because there would be one community school committee, one principal and one staff dealing with the education. According to Weinberg, it's "educationally more sound, and it's economical."

The LKSD does not have to take over elementary schools where a secondary program is established, but Weinberg said it is more cost effective that they do so. Cost effectiveness is important to Weinberg who said that "if education is cost effective, it assures that quality be maintained."

As for Toksook's reluctance to join the LKSD, Weinberg said "in my 7 years here there has been a cry for local control." Now that local control is a reality, people still prefer to leave decisions about their education to the federal government—to which they only have an advisory function."

But it appears that villages with BIA schools exercise a good deal of local control. As Bill Benton of the Bethel BIA office said, "The school boards are only advisory, but we listen." For example the final decision about whether or not a teacher is retained is made by the village. They also have the power to accept or reject programs. "We don't force anything down their throats anymore. We've come a long way," Benton said.

Weinberg said the BIA education program is a good one, and feels the LKSD can do equally well. He said change is difficult because people, "know about the BIA, have dealt with them and know what to expect. They are comfortable with that relationship, and are reluctant to give it up."

Will they have to give it up? If the village asks the BIA to stay—can they? Benton said, the situation is a "galloping mess" right now.

An informed source said that shortly after statehood, a memorandum agreement was entered into between the state Department of Education and BIA officials. That memorandum considered the eventual provision of all education by the state, and the transfer of that function from the BIA to the State Department of Education. A provision in that agreement requires that great efforts be made to gain the consent of villages before any transfer from the BIA to the state is made.

There are some who are now saying that no great effort was made to gain the consent of Toksook Bay before that transfer was carried out.

This is a question that affects more villages than Toksook Bay. Nunapitchuk, too, is scheduled to lose their BIA school because of their secondary education program. Kwigillingok, who is eligible for a high school under the Hootch settlement, has withdrawn its request for one, in order not to lose its BIA elementary school, and a petition in Kipnuk is asking that the BIA elementary school not be transferred over to the LKSD.

The question of the state taking over the BIA schools will be talked about at the LKSD meeting in Kipnuk on Saturday, and it is the topic of a public hearing scheduled for January 29 in Bethel.

BIA SETS TAKE-OVER POLICY

Tundra Drums
2/5/77

The Lower Kuskokwim School District has repealed a policy that would have allowed tem to take-over certain BIA elementary schools. That action came at the LKSD Board meeting in Kipnuk on January 22.

The two-month old policy which caused an uproar at the village level stated "That the District will assume the operation of BIA elementary schools in each village where a district operated high school is established." When that policy was made public, it met with resistance from villages where people said they had not been consulted about the take-over before a decision was made.

Just a week after the LKSD rescinded its take-over policy, the BIA came out with a statement that said no school would be transferred unless the village agreed to it. These actions have virtually ensured that there will be no mandatory school transfers in the forseeable future.

The idea of school transfers is not new. A memorandum agreement was entered into between the State Department of Education and BIA officials just after statehood. That agreement considered the eventual transfer of all BIA schools to create a single education system. Negotiations to that end have continued since 1963.

The LKSD became involved in school transfers after Senate Bill 35 created Regional Education Attendance Areas, (REAA's) last year. That move was designed to bring local control into the school system.

After SB-35 became a reality, the BIA Area Director wrote to all of the newly elected REAA school boards. According to a statement made at the recent AVCP Convention, by Emil Kowalczyk, of the BIA office in Juneau, "In March of 1976, the Area Director wrote each of the newly elected REAA school boards of our willingness to coordinate operation of our BIA day schools with the Reaa's. Should the REAA desire to assume the ity for the control and operation of BIA day schools, this option was made available to them."

Based on that March letter the LKSD understood it had permission from the BIA to take-over schools, and came up with the take-over policy in November, that has been repealed.

The 1975 Indian Self-Determination Act has much to do with the policy that the BIA has now formulated. That Act guarantees that native people will be involved in decisions that affect them. Based on the Self-Determination Act, and village imput that resulted

village imput that resulted from the LKSD take-over decision, the BIA policy now states that there will be no transfers made without village agreement.

At the public hearing on January 29, it became clear that villages can have both the BIA elementary school and a state high school.

Al Weinberg, Superintendent of LKSD, said that there will be secondary programs in villages that are guaranteed one under the Hootch settlement. He said that he will recommend to the LKSD Board that construction in five villages begin this year. These are, Kipnuk and Akiak, because they were both named in Bond Issues in 1974 and 1976, Kwigillingok, because it has the most long standing request for a high school; Nunapitchuk, which presently has a secondary program underway in an inadequate facility, and Atmaultaluk, which has a partial program.

As for the future, Joerene Hout, Chairperson of the LKSD Board, said, "That the ultimate goal of the state is to have one education program."

But recent action by the state might not bear that out. Negotations between the BIA and the state for the transfer of schools ended on December 29. The BIA offered what has been called a "generous settlement," and the state turned it down. Because of that the BIA ended the negotations which had been going on since 1963, and declared all earlier agreements with the state null and void.

Induced in the BIA offer to the state was a years' supply of fuel, all the necessary supplies to begin the school year, funds to carry both the hot lunch and the teachers aide program for two years in all schools being transfered, to complete any new construction or major alterations that were scheduled and funded, and finally all buildings and real property were to be transfered at no cost to the state.

Why didn't the state accept the offer? Weinberg said he thought the state was holding out for a better offer. Another source suggested that the state is actually not ready to pick-up the costs of a single education system, and purposely caused the negotiations to be broken off.

Whatever it is that may be going on, the LKSD and BIA policies set recently seem to indicate that Alaska's dual education system will continue indefinitely.

Tundra Times 3/2/77

TT asks —
What kind of shape other REAA's are in

Just how are the Regional Education Attendance Area's (REAA) doing as they approach the end of their first year as independent school districts? Are they providing quality education to students while staying within their financial boundaries? Or are instructional services suffering due to lack of funds?

The Tundra Times contacted a number of the REAA's to find out if the problem confronting the Bering Straits School [illegible] is the exception or the rule for the new REAA's.

John Farley, Chairman of the Aleutian Region School District was confident that his schools will stay within their budgets. "We've been on top of the situation from the beginning. We're in the black now and hope to come out of the year within our budget." he said.

Funding Not Adequate

"Funding was not adequate," Farley continued. "In order to make it we had to cut transportation costs and minimize staffing in the administrative areas, but not in the teaching areas."

The Aleutian Region School District eliminated the hot lunch program from their budget at the beginning of the school year. "We realized we couldn't afford it and it was felt the communities didn't want it then," Farley said, "So far we've had no negative responses,"

In the Bethel area the Lower Kuskokwim School District deals with the hot lunch program in another way. "We went from providing a Type A lunch (main course, potatoes, vegetable, dessert, milk) to providing a Type B lunch (soup, sandwich, fruit, milk)," said Richard Hazen, Business Manager for the REAA. "The meal is still nutritious and this has resulted in a savings of about $140,000 alone this year. The savings was not so much in the food as in the cost of personnel to prepare the meal." Hazen continued.

Jim Zuelow, Superintendent of the Iditarod School District said his schools also switched to the Type B lunch program. "In general we look forward to ending the year with a balanced budget and our policy is to provide the best quality education with the resources we have." Zuelow said. "We are, though, concerned with the adequacy of the current financing system."

BIA Transfer

The Northwest Arctic School District not only assumed control of the state schools, but also picked up two Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. Mary Schaeffer, a board member of the REAA commented, "We'll make it through the year although we started out with a deficit. We've had to make cuts in maintenance and upgrading of schools, that will have to wait until we get more funding." she said.

"We would have been ok if we hadn't had to take over the two BIA schools. We didn't get any transitional funds from the BIA." said Mrs. Schaeffer.

Dennis Tiepelman, Executive Director of Mauneluk Association agreed with Mrs. Schaeffer and commented on the statewide situation. "Everybody came in with budget constraints and problems. We had to look closely at our funding and manage." he stated.

Robert Clark, Chairman of the Southwest Region School District commented his REAA was fortunate that their schools were close to the regional center (Dillingham). "We anticipated carry-over funds from last year and we had made plans to use the money to help us get through this year," Clark said, "But some regions ended last year with large deficits and we had to give the funds to them."

Careful Management

Clark went on to say that his REAA would make it through the year "with careful management and tightening of the purse strings."

It appears that, although the new school districts are operating on limited and carefully managed budgets, they are not sacrificing quality educational standards.

Perhaps feelings of the many involved in administering education in the rural areas were summed up best by Robert Clark when he stated, "things are a hell of a lot better than they were two years ago."

Sen. Stevens asks REAA food aid

3/2/77

Tundra Times

Concerned that three school districts have now discontinued hot lunch programs, Senator Ted Stevens today sent a telegram to Secretary of Agriculture Bergland requesting that additional federal support be furnished to the State.

"Unlike most other federal programs which realize the cost differential between Alaska and the lower 48, the Department of Agriculture does not provide any additional funds to our school districts.

"That means that the federal support may totally cover the cost of a lunch or hot breakfast in Mississippi while it would cover only half the cost in Alaska," Stevens said.

The Bering Straits School District recently joined with Fairbanks and Juneau in discountinuing the federally subsidized program.

Bering Straits REAA in cash crunch

Village students boycott classes over cutbacks

From Our Anchorage Bureau

Students in Shishmeref, White Mountain and Teller boycotted classes last week and effectively closed schools protesting the termination of 25 school employees and the elimination of the hot lunch program.

The sharp cutbacks were made by Superintendent Ron Hohman in an effort to reduce a projected June deficit of $600,000 for the Bering Straits Regional Education Attendance Area (REAA).

According to Hohman state funding to the REAA was insufficient at the beginning of the school year and they were forced to start out with a $900,000 deficit. Cuts made in administrative and other areas reduced the deficit to an estimated $599,000 and last weeks move terminating teacher aides, cooks, custodial personnel and cancelling the hot lunch program is expected to drop the deficit by another $142,000.

Hohman traveled to Juneau late last week to meet with Education Commissioner Marshall Lind and members of the State Legislature. The school district is seeking a supplemental appropriation to help bal... out the year.

Following hearings held by the House Health, Education and Social Service Committee on the financial status of the REAA's Hohman appeared confident of the outcome. "We were very well received by the Committee," he said, "I'm very optomistic that corrective action will be taken."

Commissioner Lind disagrees with Hohman's allegations of inadequate state financing of the school district. "I see no legitimate grounds to support a request for a supplemental appropriation at this time," Lind said, "They need to take another close look at their total budget and report to the Department what the real deficit is."

Alaska Advocate March 3, 1977

The $60 million training exercise — snafus and foulups delay bush ed program

by John Greely

Juneau

Widespread confusion, coupled with bureaucratic foulups, pose a real danger to the scheduled start this summer of a $60 million expansion of rural high schools authorized by voters.

The construction program — designed to help end decades of school discrimination against Alaska's village residents — probably will get off to a feeble start.

However, the eventual success of the largest bond issue adopted by voters last November hinges once again on the ability of state and local officials to overcome a history of snafus that left many bush schools unbuilt or so badly constructed they are hardly habitable.

In the meantime, some state officials have begun to view the big construction program as something of a "training" exercise for local educators who increasingly are seeking to escape what they see as a paternalistic attitude of state government toward them.

The confusion and foulups stem from attempts by the state to do just that — give to the villages control they have never enjoyed over education of their children.

In 1975, the legislature disbanded the centralized State-Operated School System and created 21 new school districts. For some of the hundreds of villages touched by this move, it meant their first contact with local government of any kind.

It was an historic decision, one aimed at breaking a trend that had kept Native secondary education in the hands of mostly White bureaucrats many miles and cultures removed.

The trend had begun in Alaska 70 years earlier, in 1905, when the territory was empowered by Congress to create a dual school system for Whites and Natives.

The legislation, dubbed the Nelson Act, left it to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), to educate Native children by exporting them to boarding schools in other states. Those White or mixed-blood children leading a "civilized life" in the bush were sent to schools built by the territory's tobacco tax revenue or local donations.

Dozens of "Nelson schools" were erected, while many Native children left for schools in Oregon or Oklahoma, and many more stayed behind to forego a high school education.

Eventually, the BIA built three boarding schools in Alaska for Natives of high school age. The fourth and largest, Mt. Edgecumbe, was fashioned out of an old Naval air station at Sitka in 1947.

However, the forced airplaning of Native students to other states continued when their demands for schooling exceeded the capacity of the four federal boarding homes.

Aftger statehood in 1959, it took years for a fledgling government to recognize its responsibilities and extract them from BIA purview, a process that is unfolding still today at 44 schools operated by the federal agency.

Finally, in 1966, when nearly 900 students were being sent to high schools outside each year, the state acted.

But, the regional high schools built with state money in Nome, Kodiak and Bethel followed the same trend of territorial days, forcing Native kids to leave their families for nine months of each year.

The same consequences — disharmony in village families, drug and alcohol abuse, high drop-out rates and even suicides in the boarding schools — also followed in some cases.

It didn't take long for the state to realize the regional schools were largely failures, and in 1968, the first bond issue for construction of secondary schools in the villages was placed on the ballot. The $10 million issue passed easily.

Even with larger bonds — the $60 million of 1976 is the biggest single issue ever approved — being placed on the ballot and accepted by voters every two years after that, it was a slow and painful process to bring education closer to the villages.

For example, the state attempted to reach those children who didn't want or weren't allowed to leave home for an education by increasing its correspondence studies program tenfold.

The program worked in some cases, but the lessons often were irrelevant to village life or fell victim to untrained parents unable to supervise their children's formal education.

Soaring costs of erecting fully equipped schools in the bush — the price of an average school quadrupled in 10 years to more than $200 a square foot in 1976 — pointed to the biggest problem, however.

Too often, schools that were authorized in bond issues were delayed as the state borrowed from one project's budget to finish another.

Or worse, the schools that were built proved to be shoddy and a severe drain on local schools to maintain.

In the community of Tanana, for instance, a vocational building was erected last year, but school officials soon were outraged when they found overhead wiring made many of the machines unusable. A shower was installed dangerously close to the arc-welding machine, and students and instructors couldn't talk over the noise generated by the building's exhaust system.

The problem largely was one of supervising contractors in remote areas through periodic visits to the site.

But, there were problems at the other end as well.

Holy Cross, for example, wanted to start a high school program with a small addition to its existing grade school building. Funds for the $326,000 project were authorized by voters in 1974.

The job was not put out to bid in 1975. When bids were called in 1976, the lowest was 50 per cent too high, chiefly because the state required the addition to be placed on pilings, local officials said.

No buildings have ever been placed on pilings in Holy Cross. (For a detailed look at troubles experienced on one school project, see accompanying story page 7.)

It was against this backdrop that the legislature concluded in 1975 that rural schools could be better built and administered at the local level.

So, creation of the vast Alaska Unorganized Borough School Districts was followed early in 1976 by separate legislation allowing local educators to receive construction grants from school bonds, or elect to have the state continue building their schools.

The legislation took effect last July, just as the 21 Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAA), were moving out of their year-long transitional phase into full autonomy.

Continued

The $60 million training exercise... Alaska Advocate 3/3/77

At the same time, lawyers were settling the celebrated "Molly Hootch" case, in which legal claims surrounding the rights of some 2,800 high school-aged children in 120 villages were argued for three years.

Although the Alaska Supreme Court ruled the state was under no legal duty to provide schools in all villages, it was an unanswered moral question nonetheless.

In September, lawyers on both sides agreed to a schedule for starting schools in each of the villages by the spring of 1979.

Meanwhile, more than half of the REAAs elected to take construction grants from the state, a move no one envisioned would be as complicated as it has turned out to be.

The legislature, leery of the building track record of the Department of Education, turned the $60 million over to the Department of Public Works last spring.

Thus, in order for districts to secure the money, they must pass inspection of two major state agencies — Education, where the guidelines of the Hootch settlement and basic curriculum questions are monitored, and Public Works, where approval of all designs and specifications, as well as the checkbook itself, rests.

Public Works, meanwhile, has been undergoing a major organizational shakeup in its now-defunct Division of Buildings. Two divisions, General Design and General Construction and Maintenance, replaced one.

Richard Holden, deputy commissioner of public works, said the split was made to create a "check" on state builders and to rid his agency of "cumbersome" procedures.

Holden's plan apparently has only just begun.

It was his job to issue guidelines for the construction grants to be disbursed. The rules went out in mid-December, when superintendents of the 21 new districts gathered in Anchorage for a conference.

The meeting apparently didn't make it clear that the state was retaining tight control over the grant projects, from selection of architects to the payment of bills.

In turn, superintendents unfamiliar with the state bureaucracy were shocked to learn that overhead — ranging from architectural fees to their expenses for attending the December conference — would eat up 15 to 30 per cent of their grant money.

Joe Cooper, superintendent of the Upper Railbelt REAA in Nenana, wrote to his legislator in January protesting "oppressive" state controls and high overhead. He was joined by a chorus of other educators who had applied for grants.

Cooper said he had an architect prepared to draw up plans for three school projects but that Holden had rejected his selection of firms.

In an interview, the deputy commissioner said Cooper's district had been in potential danger because the architect promised to supervise about $12 million worth of construction at sites 500 miles apart, "an impossible task."

Delays piled upon delays — at one point, public works officials had to recover several grant applications that had been forgotten in a file drawer — until the Senate Finance Committee called state officials in for a hearing on Feb. 18.

Holden explained that many of the protests lodged by local educators were unfounded or spawned of inexperience. Several suprintendents were demanding formal regulations for the grant program, but that would take months to push through official channels, he said.

Such overhead as architectural fees had not increased significantly, Holden said, but had just been truely identified for individual projects, rather than kept artificially low and camouflaged by borrowing from other budgets, as was the past practice.

Naturally, overhead on relatively small construction projects will eat up a proportionately greater share of money because they often require as much design and inspection work.

Educators holding a meager $500,000 for a school addition often fail to realize this, he said.

Holden explained his problems adequately, and the hearing apparently served its purpose. Between Feb. 9, when notices of the hearing went out, and late last week, $22 million worth of grant contracts were approved by Education and Public Works.

However, millions more are pending paperwork to be completed in Juneau and far flung villages.

That raises serious questions about whether bids can be let on many of the 30 school projects originally envisioned to start this summer. About half of the 70 jobs authorized by the $60 million bond are scheduled to begin in 1978.

It normally takes 45 to 90 days for a project to be bid after designs are completed, experts say. If contracts are not let until May or June, builders may have a tough chore acquiring materials in time to meet barge schedules critical in the delivery of goods to many villages.

In addition, some experts note that relatively small contracts offered in June generally draw higher bids than identical ones offered in March of each year because bidders are not interested in isolated, marginally profitable jobs until it fits into their other projects.

"I'm just guessing right now," said Tom Lunsford, director of general design, "but I think we can get 25 per cent (of the 30 projects) completed this year."

Senate finance chairman John Sackett, R-Galena, has called for another meeting on the situation March 15-16 here. Superintendents are expected to resume their pleas then that the grants be turned over to their school boards with no strings attached.

Such a radical step probably is not in the offing soon. A large chunk of the state's public works program is tied up in the school bonds.

However, Sackett's committee may give some thought to a suggestion by Cooper and other superintendents that simple after-the-fact auditing be used to replace many of the step-by-step approvals needed under existing guidelines.

Sackett said this week he and other legislators also were interested in possibly increasing the $20,000 ceiling over which all state contracts must go out to bid. That could free some school projects from the state papermill, he said.

In the meantime, Lunsford said, it will take time for local and state officials to learn their new and changing relationships.

"There are some of us," he said, "who see this entire $60 million bond as training."

REAA...

All-Alaska Weekly, September 10, 1976

In 1975 the landmark legislation passing control to local boards was approved by the state legislature. This year money was allocated to finance the new districts.

One hundred per cent of the new districts' education costs is paid by the state. In the North Star Borough School District, for example, 95 per cent of the basic education costs is funded by the state through the Public School Foundation (PSF). This year the PSF budget is $132.8 million.

In addition to receiving funds from PSF, the newly created REAA's have $40 million in funding from the state, as well as $100,000 for school board elections in rural areas.

During this period of transition and takeover of more than 100 SOS schools, there are more questions than answers, and, in some cases, more problems than solutions.

For example, the state department of education will not know until possibly late October how many new teachers have been hired by the new districts and how many students are being taught by the REAA's.

Teacher hiring in some areas was a hectic and chaotic situation. As the deadline day of school opening approached, some schools were still without enough teachers. Teacher job interviews, it was reported, were less than thorough.

Word of job openings passed via the grapevine with some teachers rushing to highway communities or flying (at their own expense) to villages for interviews. Some teachers, who filed applications in early spring, were hired one week before school started.

Teachers going to remote locations had to pack personal belongings, household goods and enough food to carry them through the nine month school year. Many of them, caught short of cash, had to borrow money to buy a large food supply and pay the freight costs.

The real rub came with housing for the increased school personnel. In most places teachers were told, "housing is tight. You will have to make your own arrangements." This resulted in some teachers sharing the same living quarters. Because of the

REAA . . .

—Continued

housing shortage, teacher couples were preferred.

One couple on a tour in Fairbanks heard of a teaching position in a nearby community. The man applied for it, received it, and they flew home to quit their jobs and sell their home in order to teach in Alaska. (The retirement pay here, four times greater than in their midwestern state, was the deciding factor, they said.)

Another problem is school buildings, especially for those communities where there has not been an elementary or secondary school.

The success of REAA hinges on the $59 million school bond proposal that will be on the ballot this November.

In addition to SOS schools, a number of Bureau of Indian Affairs schools (BIA) have been taken over by REAA. The largest one is the 700-student school in Kotzebue.

"We are vitally interested in this transition being a successful one," said Deputy Commissioner Nate Cole. "We are totally committed to local control of education. We put a lot of our department's resources into this decentralization."

When Cole was asked if he though REAA was a more expensive program than SOS, he said, "In my personal opinion, I do not believe it is.

"I base that on having done some analysis on SOS costs from its inception until its termination this year."

Meanwhile, at the Center for Northern Research (CNER) at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, a study has been underway for the past year on the Public School Foundation program.

"One reason for the study will be to determine whether REAA is more or less expensive than SOS. Right now no one knows," said E. Dean Coon, assistant director of the center.

The study, due for completion next year, will also determine an equitable method of collecting and distributing state funds for schools. They will look at the validity of regional differences and make recommendations. Right now, for example, the Barrow school district gets 133 per cent more per student than the state spends per student in Anchorage.

On the subject of REAA funding no one is sure whether the money for REAAs is "too little, just right, or too much," Coon said.

This fall CNER will sponsor four regional workshops in Fairbanks to introduce reports and gather public opinion on public school funding.

Voters To Determine Bush Schools

By Sam Kito

THE RECENT OUT of court settlement by the State of Alaska resulted in a commitment by the state to enable elementary and secondary school age children in every bush village to continue their education at home.

This settlement is designed to stop the disruption of family life that existed in the past by forcing children to leave their village home to attend school. Sometimes children had to travel to Oklahoma, Oregon, Mt. Edgecumbe and Wrangell Institute.

Those students traveling to Wrangell Institute ranged from grade one through grade eight. Imagine for a minute, a parent with a six - year - old standing at the airport waiting to send his child to school for nine months to be raised without intimate parental guidance.

IT IS unfortunate that this litigation had to proceed to conclusion prior to a settlement being reached. The settlement is contingent upon the passage of the $39 million rural bond issue to face the voters in November. Of that amount, $20 million will initially be set aside to settle the Molly Hootch lawsuit.

Now that a settlement has been reached, passage of the Rural Construction Bond issue is essential to provide quality and responsive education in rural Alaska.

If the bond issue fails, Alaska Legal Services has reserved the right to continue the suit.

Even though the Supreme Court ruled that the state did not have a constitutional obligation to provide education in each community, it did reserve the right to review the progress of establishing schools to provide education in rural Alaska in the future.

THE NEGOTIATED settlement is a step in the right direction. The governor should be commended for recognizing that the Boarding Home Program and dormitories were expensive alternatives to providing local education.

The settlement could not have been completed by the governor and legal services if the legislature did not pass the rural bond issue. The legislative leadership recognized that a bond package had to be approved in order for negotiations to culminate in a settlement. The action of the leadership will be greatly appreciated by parents and children who will be able to attend school in their own community.

There has been a continued effort to move education closer to isolated communities, as the parents' voices become more vociferous and the Body Politic listened. Listening were elected politicians, educators, and native leaders.

Observe the move to regional high schools in 1965, the development of the successful area high school concept implemented early in this decade and the Boarding - Home Program. The regional high school concept built dormitories in Nome and Bethel. The dormitory scheduled for Fairbanks was not constructed and was not wanted by parents in rural Alaska because the area high school concept was developed.

ADDITIONALLY, the completion of local education in rural Alaska will be determined by the 21 local education districts created July 1, 1976, with the passage of Senate Bill 35. These newly - created districts will be afforded the opportunity to control education on a local level. They will determine how local communities will resolve parental concerns regarding how the negotiated settlement is to be implemented.

Now it is up to the voters to decide whether we will provide educational facilities in remote areas of the state that will comply with the negotiated settlement.

It is my hope that the Molly Hootch case will be permanently closed.

Sam Kito, a lifetime Alaskan, is president of the Alaska Federation of Natives.

The Anchorage Times, Sunday, September 26, 1976

Bond Issue Will Fund 70-80 School Projects

All-Alaska Weekly, December 3, 1976

The proposition to issue $59.6 million in bonds for new construction and remodeling of schools in Alaska passed on Nov. 2 and sixteen of the 21 new rural school districts which were formed as a result of the well-known and now-settled Molly Hootch case will come under the statewide construction project; and as a result some 2,780 students who have had to leave their home towns to receive a secondary education will now be able to attend school at home.

Of the total bond issue $20 million will go for rural secondary school construction. Some rural districts will be building new facilities, while others will be remodeling existing facilities to handle secondary enrollment.

Overall, 32 rural and urban districts throughout Alaska will be funded under the bond issue, and the total number of construction projects will number between 70 and 80. Construction will begin in some areas this summer, and all construction should be completed by December of 1978.

"We'd like to tell everyone in the state how grateful we are that the bond issue passed," said Katherine Hurley of Wasilla, president of the Alaska State Board of Education. "It was wonderful to see the support we had from all over the state, and that people really supported education for the rural areas.

"Even in the cities they did. Otherwise it would not have passed. This speaks well for the kind of issue that it was, and it shows that if you really have a need people will vote for it."

PLEASED BY OUTCOME

"Frankly, I'm very happy and pleased," said State Board of Education member Darwin Heine, of Fairbanks. "With things in kind of an unknown situation with the pipeline winding down, I wasn't too sure about any of the bond issues. I'm happy it came out as well as it did.

"As far as education in the state is concerned, we can now move forward with the commitments the Legislature, Department of Education, State Board of Education and Governor have made to all the people, particularly in the rural areas where there are minimal school facilities."

"I'm very pleased," said state board member Jan Hohman, of Nome. "I was rather worried. I didn't think the larger cities would go for it, although it's certainly needed in the rural areas.

"Our son is not that far from high school age. If you're a parent in the community and have to send your kids away after eighthth grade, it really hits home. Passing the bond issue was the only fair thing to do.

"It's been totally unfair to send young children from their parents. I'm really excited the bond ixsue passed," Hohman said.

State Board member Thelma Langdon, of Anchorage, said, "I'm delighted the bond issue passed.

"I'm disappointed Anchorage didn't go for it as much as I was hoping (approximately 24,000 voted no and 20,000 voted yes), but the number of Anchorage people that did vote for it made if possible for the bond issue to pass."

Several key groups supported the bond issue in Anchorage, Langdon noted.

"Sue Linford, an Anchorage school board member, worked with several committees to support the bond," Langdon said.

"The campaign in Anchorage media-wise tipped the balance," said state board member Malcolm Roberts, of Anchorage. "Without that, the bond issue wouldn't have happened.

"I'm gratified that the bond issue passed because the schools are needed, and it reflected an understanding on the part of urban Alaskans for the very real needs of Alaska's children in smaller communities."

TURNING POINT

"The turning point was the TV campaign explaining the issue. We're meeting a very real problem. Children have been taken from their homes for decades. The TV spots clearly explained the importance of the bond issue," Roberts said.

Board member August Anderson, of Sitka, said he was "surprised for one, and happy for another. We apparently can see the sensitivity of the people. It's pretty clear how they all feel.

"It had to be done sooner or later. Passing the legislation for the Regional Education Attendance areas and not providing schools is like an empty lunch box. The funding is necessary to get some action.'"

Anderson said some persons he talked to had mixed reaction about the bond issue.

"Some said, the villages are dying, why preserve them. I say we are morally obligated to help our fellow man," Anderson said.

Board member Lt. Col. Terry Brown of Fort Richardson, said, "I'm very happy. I've been out to some villages and seen the need for schools, and needless to say I'm extremely happy to see the money passed by the voters. It shows a greater awareness than we were willing to anticipate of the need for improved school facilities in rural areas.

"The initial thought was that metropitan areas might defeat the bond issue, if it were to be defeated. There was a big effort to acquaint the public with the importance of the bond issue. It was a big education effort," Brown said.

(EXCERPT)

AVCP-Yupiktat Bista seek contracts to run twenty-eight schools

Tundra Times 12/8/76

According to Mr. Carl Jack, Executive Director of the Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc. and Yupiktak Bista, Inc., plans are underway to study the feasibility of AVCP, Inc. contracting for the operation of the 28 BIA schools in the AVCP (Bethel) Region. "The plan to do a feasibility study for the take over of the 28 BIA schools by AVCP is the result of concerns expressed by the people from the villages that currently have BIA schools" stated Carl Jack. "Their concern is whether the quality of Education will suffer wnen REAA's take over their schools due to a lack of adequate funding."

The current goal of the State Department of Education is to take over all BIA schools in the next three (3) years or by 1979. Further, the State Commissioner of Education is trying very hard to get the BIA to agree to keep funding the BIA schools even after REAA takes them over. Further the State Department of Education wants the BIA to keep paying for the following for 5 years after the REAA takes the BIA Schools over:

(a) AVEC costs (19 schools)
(b) Maintenance costs (32 schools)
(c) Hot Lunch Program (32 schools)
(d) New construction costs
(e) Take all Title monies and
(f) Operations including salaries, etc.

It is estimated that over the next 8 years, if the BIA schools are taken over by REAA's, that this will cost the AVCP region more money than the BIA Bethel Agency get to run the schools and other programs, due to the fact that the responsibility for paying for education will go from State to local government through Unorganized Borough concept that the State is working on.

The State of Alaska has been very reluctant to spend any of its general fund for bush education. The money from oil and other resources currently goes into the State general fund and currently the state is meeting their responsibility for bush education by two primary sources, one is through bond issues in which the public pays for it and the other is through BIA funding.

"The final decision for AVCP to take over the 28 BIA schools is contingent upon several factors: first is the full authorization by the AVCP delegates to undertake a feasibility study for the administration of the schools under contract with BIA. Second is the results of the feasibility study and third, which is probably more important than the first two is the consent from the villages for AVCP to administer the schools" Mr. Jack stated. "We have submitted a letter to the BIA notifying them of our intent to contract for these schools with copies to the Alaska Commissioner of Education and affected REAA Boards and Superintendents. This move we have taken is within the spirit of the Indian Self-Determination and Educational Assistance Act and as long as we intend to contract for these schools, the BIA cannot transfer them to the REAA's. If all goes well, AVCP will become the largest educational agency within the State of Alaska and will be able to maintain, if not escalate, the Federal support of the BIA schools." Mr. Jack further stated.

CARL JACK, Executive Director of the Association of Village Council Presidents, Inc. and Yupiktak Bista, Inc.

Tundra Times Wednesday, December 22, 1976

State to get tough on rural school design quality

by Bob Speed
Ketchikan Daily News

Richard H. Holden, deputy commissioner of the Public Works Department says the state is moving toward a "get tough now" policy on architectural quality in public schools.

His statement came Friday as part of the final presentation before the Alaska School Board meeting in Ketchikan three days last week.

Discussion centered on buck-passing by state agencies and private architects which resulted in construction of an inadequate school building in the village of Shismaref, near Kotzebue. Holden used the case as just one example of inadequate planning and inspection.

Board member Jan Hohman, of Nome, noted that children in Shismaref have no running water for showers after physical education classes and that the school sometimes doesn't receive enough power for both lights and heat at certain times of day. "So they have to decide whether they want to see or be warm," Mrs. Hohman said.

Architect Malcolm Roberts, appearing with Holden before the board, agreed that the situation in the village of fewer than 250 people "is a mess," saying "I think it's fortunate the Shishmaref thing didn't hit the press before the (state school constuction bond) election."

The answer, he said, lay in designing a set of prototype plans to standardize school construction in the future.

"You can't take three classrooms, take out some walls, put up a chalkboard, put a basketball net above that and put a wrestling mat on the wall to protect the blackboard and call it a multi-purpose room," he said, which is what happened in Shishmaref.

He said a school design must fit the needs of the local community it will serve, as well as the climate and geology of the area. He said a building code for school construction is now being formulated by the public works department, an effort applauded by the board. He said the code would reduce construction costs and prevent many mistakes common to non-standardized construction. The public works department is responsible for all school construction in the state, except when delegated to other agencies by the legislature.

Board member Beverly Horn said after the meeting that rural schools have enough problems without inadequate construction in the first place. She said the state has no money to replace buildings lost in fires or other calamities, adding that at least six bush schools have been lost to fire in the past five years. She said insurance is either prohibitively expensive for rural schools or nonexistent due to inadequate fire protetion facilities and training. She said children whose bush schools are destroyed and who live in communities where no other building is available for classes have little choice but correspondence study.

Another problem common to rural schools is vandalism, board members said. Holden said the best way to prevent vandalism is to get entire village populations involved in school construction, even if it's "moving rocks or laying carpet." He said pride in the finished product would be "the best deterrent."

Holden said the problems in the small town were examples of what should not be done, telling the board that blame ranged from the village itself, where decisions were made to alter building plans, to state agencies where people did not adequately inspect either the plans or construction when under way. He said he had fired one employe as a result of the Shishmaref boondoggle.

TRAVEL TROUBLE

Barbara Dirks of Akutan was fairly well determined to be at the recent Regional School Board meeting in Cold Bay. With this in mind, she arranged with the Coast Guard to be taken to Adak, hoping to catch a daily Reeve flight to Cold Bay. After 17 hours enroute, there was no flight from Adak, except to Anchorage, which she reached on Friday evening. She reserved a seat on the first Reeve flight the next morning. However, when Saturday morning came, the Electra was cancelled. She called Winship for a charter; it was cancelled because of weather. Finally she chartered with Orin Seybert and they started to Cold Bay. He touched down several times, reaching Cold Bay at 4:30 that afternoon. The meeting had concluded at 3:00 and Mrs. Dirks' 33 hours in transit availed her nothing as far as that meeting was concerned. She has now gone to Anchorage and will remain there until she comes to Sand Point for the meeting in February.

Other news in the region includes the cross-skiing program in False Pass and Nelson Lagoon, funded by Indian Ed. money. All of the equipment for a significant cross-country ski program has finally reached the villages. The only difficulty is that there is no snow.

The Aleut January 21, 1977

Bilingual feud halts aid to bush schools

by Rodger Painter

A long-simmering battle between the State Department of Education and federal civil rights officials has quietly halted all federal funds to 21 rural Alaska school districts.

Formal notices that the state and bush school districts have failed to comply with federal demands for bilingual education programs were served on Feb. 4.

The action freezes all applications for 1977-78 school year federal dollars by the recently created Regional Educational Attendance Area (REAA) school boards. Also stopped were any "significant increases" in present programs.

State and federal spokesmen were unable to pinpoint the potential amount of aid affected by the order, but a senior official with the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), in Seattle said it involved "millions of dollars."

An administrative hearing on the matter has been scheduled for March 21, but both sides expressed hope an agreement would be worked out before then.

Although only the 21 REAA school districts are affected by the order, the Anchorage and Fairbanks school districts also have been negotiating with OCR over bilingual education needs.

Virginia Balderrama, OCR branch chief for education in region X, which includes Alaska, declined to say whether Anchorage and Fairbanks would be cited for noncompliance as "we haven't made that determination yet.

"Anchorage and Fairbanks will be formally notified soon of their compliance status," Balderrama said.

State education officials and OCR have been sparring over who's responsible for bush school districts since initial contact on bilingual education was made in 1971.

The feds claim the Department of Education is responsible for conducting a "language characteristics" survey of students in the 21 rural districts. A model compliance plan could be drafted by the state after that, OCR says.

The federal case is based on two sections of the state constitution, several

- Continued -

/Alaska Advocate March 3, 1977

state statutes, civil rights laws and a landmark court decision known as Lau.

The state responds that it is not legally responsible for either and is helping the REAAs on bilingual education only out of a "desire to assist the smaller districts."

A 30-page supportive brief by OCR for the March 21 hearing outlines a long negotiating process which started more than two years ago with a formal request for a survey.

At that time, bush education was under the control of the Alaska State-Operated School System (SOS), but it was in the process of being turned over to the Alaska Unorganized Borough School District. The latter agency existed for one year as a transitional vehicle for passing control to REAAs.

SOS made one attempt to conduct a survey — but everyone involved, including the state, doubted its accuracy. The survey showed 4,626 students with a primary language other than English and that 3,508 of them were enrolled in bilingual or bicultural programs.

Standard education tests conducted in 1970 showed fourth grade bush students were 1.4 years behind the national norm. In 1974, those same students, then in the eighth grade, fell to two years behind.

More startling statistics were supplied by a University of Alaska analysis of U.S. census figures. It showed half of the state's Native population had completed no more than the sixth grade, 21 per cent completed eighth grade, 14 per cent attended high school and only eight per cent were high school graduates.

The need for bilingual education in the bush is apparent; the only argument is who's responsible for getting the programs underway.

"Certainly, the department (of education) did agree. . .to assume the lead in developing a voluntary compliance plan on behalf of all districts in the state which did not choose to develop their own directly with OCR," state Assistant Atty. Gen. Ronald Lorensen said in a Feb. 22 letter responding to the notice of noncompliance.

"The department did not do so, however, as a result of any perceived legal responsibility on its part. . .but rather out of a desire to assist the smaller districts," Lorensen wrote, "and especially the newly emerging REAAs, in the difficult and time-consuming task of developing an identification and assessment plan and then carrying it out."

"It has always been our view that OCR would have to proceed against and show that each REAA was in noncompliance. . .if OCR were to seek to withhold any federal funds. . .," Lorensen said.

One informed observer close to the case said the state's position could be construed as an attempt to make clear the lines of responsibility for rural education for future dealings with the federal government. In effect, the state is trying to wash its hands of the matter to avoid future responsibility.

That observation has at least a small ring of truth, according to Sylvia Carlson, who handled most of the negotiations with OCR for the Department of Education. "If we give much more than we should, we're going to set precedents and lose more in the future," Carlson said.

Carlson conceded the state had assumed some responsibility in the matter but not to the extent pressed by the federal government. She blamed the log delays on a "lack of understanding of the Alaska situation on the part of some individuals involved on the federal level."

"Local control of education means something totally different in Alaska; it's not gerrymandering to get around desegregation," Carlson said. "For the first time in Alaska's history, Native people have a chance to decide things for themselves at the local level."

Part of the problem, she said, is that in a lot of bush communities it is not so much a bilingual situation as a "multi-lingual."

In addition, she said, there is the "village English" syndrome, where children pick up some of their Native language and some English but never become proficient at either. The result is a kind of pidgin English.

The Department of Education finally submitted a draft compliance plan in November 1976, after being served with a letter of noncompliance. It was rejected as unacceptable. A second draft compliance plan was submitted a month later. It also was turned down.

It appears that something may be worked out before the REAAs began experiencing serious money problems, but the long delays already have been causing some difficulty. The problem was dumped on the laps of the REAAs during their first year of operation when they already had enough headaches.

At least two districts are moving on their own to comply with the OCR mandate. An OCR spokesman said that would not in any way mitigate the state's responsibilities for the other districts.

James Zuelow, superintendent for the Iditarod School District, said his district is moving independently of the state and may have its own plan to submit soon.

Unlike most state officials, Zuelow strongly supported the federal mandate for bilingual education.

"Philosophically, I favor it because it forces schools to look at problems they should be facing but are not," Zuelow said. "I have questions about the strong federal role in education, but they are forcing recognition of the problems."

The Iditarod School District dosn't have "many problems with kids coming to school not speaking English," Zuelow said, but the language deficiencies show in "depressed academic scores." Students simply can't read text books written for their grade level, he said.

REAA's are in deep financial trouble

By NELLIE WARD
From Our Juneau Bureau

Citing maintenance and operation problems and lost funding due to takeover of BIA schools, superintendents of the Bering Straits and Northwest Arctic School Districts told the House Health Education and Social Services Committee last week that they are in deep financial trouble.

Seeking supplemental appropriations to bail the districts out of financial problems, Superintendents Homan and White represent two of three unorganized school districts in the state experiencing problems.

Senator Frank Ferguson (D–Kotzebue), appearing on behalf of the school districts charged that the legislature "has been waiting for four years for an equitable formula from the Department of Education and it has not yet come down and it probably won't for next year."

Ferguson charged that had the districts had an equitable formula they probably would not be in the financial badlands that they are. An equitable formula would mean an increase in the instructional unit allotment and an increase for the two districts in area differential, for unique high costs of transportation and maintenance and operation.

Commissioner of Education Marshall Lind said that of the thirty-one city and borough districts and the twenty-one REAA's, only three are in trouble, one only seriously. He said that the Northwest problem arose from the take-over of BIA schools and the abundant federal funding lost in that take-over. With the take-over, large maintenance and operating budgets were lost to be absorbed by smaller department budgets. Lind said that the present formula will not sustain the type of hot lunch, teacher aide program and plant management offered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Lind said that he believes that the Northwest District has handled the cutbacks well by charging those that can afford to pay for hot lunches and reducing the number of teacher and aides to cost-efficient levels.

The Bering Straits District last week made cut-backs that eliminated approximately eighteen positions throughout the Bering Straits region, removal of the hot lunch program and custodians altogether. The reductions resulted in a mass boycott of classes region-wide in the Bering Straits schools. Teachers have, however, kept the doors open and are offering classes to those few that will attend.

Other problems areas that were voiced were the poor condition of state built and maintained schools. Commissioner of Public Works Richard Holden stated that the state's budget for maintenance of buildings remained the same while bonding propositions were passed in large numbers which spread the maintenance budget thin. Both Bering Straits and Northwest Arctic School District spent hundreds of thousands of dollars.

This past construction season to bring schools up to a better level of care. Heating systems and generators were rebuilt or replaced following histories of fires and destruction due to lack of maintenance. Commissioner Holden, testifying before the HESS committee said that it probably would take thirty million dollars, plus or minus five million, to bring the schools up to safe standards. He said that one third of the schools are okay, one third need work and one third could be "thrown away."

Commissioner Lind said that the problems of one district could not be pointed out and worked over in order to come up with a formula that would suit all other schools. He said that the root of the problem should be scrutinized and the formula should come from that. He cited problems with a data-gathering contract with the University for the delay in building a formula that would be equitable. Lind said that the department now has most, or part of the information that they need to proceed and will attempt to make progress as quickly as possible.

Studies completed by rural legislators have shown that if the foundation formula is increased for the rural areas, allowing for the area differential, additional costs involved with the state could push thirty million dollars the first year. Legislators are waiting now to see the governor's proposal for area differential.

Another problem area is the Alaska Village Electrification Corporation (AVEC) contract where the state subsidized the electrification of rural areas where schools were in need of power. The contract was written under the old state-operated school system and will not expire until March 1979. Commissioner Lind feels that education "has been saddled with the responsibility (of electrification) for too long." Alternate means to the present method of providing power and electrification funding are now being explored.

Tundra Times, Wednesday, March 9, 1977

Daily News-Miner, Fairbanks, Alaska, Thursday, March 17, 1977-

Students protest to raise teachers' pay

By DERMOT COLE
Staff Writer

Students at Anderson High School near Clear are planning to boycott classes Monday because they don't think their teachers are getting paid enough.

Bob Crowder, student body president, said 38 of the 48 students at the school have signed a petition saying they will not attend school unless the Upper Railbelt School Board agrees to sign a contract with the teachers.

The students had originally planned to stay out of school until a contract is signed, but a spokeswoman for the students said today that because the teachers might be blamed for a student boycott, it will only last one day.

A petition has also been circulating around town and, of the 115 families in Anderson, 102 have signed. The town has population of 370 and is five miles northwest of Clear Air Force Base.

Kay Carter, one of the parents involved, said there has been some talk about parents keeping elementary school students at home and setting up a picket line.

The teachers are among the 28 in the Upper Railbelt School District, which includes Healy, Cantwell, Anderson and Clear.

They have been without a contract since last spring, according to School Board member Ed Frye, who said negotiations are to resume Friday night. He said the teachers declared an impasse in January.

Frye said he could not discuss details of the negotiations, but Carter said the teachers are asking for a 10 per cent increase in base pay. She said the teachers now receive $13,400 and are asking for $14,700. She also said that the teachers are among the lowest paid in the state.

"The school district has the funds," she said, and added, "We don't know why they are not giving their teachers contracts."

Crowder said the students believe the teachers are entitled to a pay increase. The students are "determined to stay out of school," he added.

Frye said Wednesday he did not know of the students' petition and added, "I think that the parents are probably uninformed on the negotiations and the negotiations process."

No parents have contacted him regarding the situation, he said, although they may have contacted other board members.

Carter said the teachers have talked about a strike, but instead they decided to "first make the community aware and then the community would be behind them in sympathy."

Legislation would reimburse for school construction

From Our Juneau Bureau

House Bill 89 passed out of the Health Education and Social Services (HESS) Committee of the House last week provides that the State shall reimburse school districts within the organized borough, monies paid for school construction incurred before July 1, 1976 and 90 per cent of their payments after July 1, 1976 for principal and interest in loans and cash paid for construction debts. The original proposal by Sam Cotten, D-Eagle River, was to pay 80 per cent which would cost the state an estimated eleven million dollars for 1978. The state currently reimburses fifty percent of construction costs for organized borough school districts.

Representative Al Nakak, D-Nome, said that the state should be consistent in payments of this type and proposed that the amounts should be increased to one hundred per cent making amounts received by organized boroughs compatible with the unorganized boroughs.

Questions were raised by committee members that should the state pay 100 percent to the districts, where would the local control lie and where would the boundaries be drawn. The committee discussed "building a fence" around what should be considered basic education and the facilities required to support that program, in relation to reimbursement of construction dollars.

Tundra Times
3/18/77

Daily News-Miner, Fairbanks, Alaska, Monday, March 21, 1977–

Eagle students build their own school

By WARD SIMS
Associated Press Writer

With hammers, nails, paint brushes and carpet tacks—plus a little help from the big folks—the 13 high school pupils in Eagle have pulled it off. They have built their own school.

It means they don't have to leave home to attend classes in another community, or to get their learning through correspondence courses.

Working through last summer and the first weeks of the current school year, the 13 high school pupils and adults of Eagle, pop. 105, turned a historic old courthouse into a school.

"I really had serious questions whether they could pull off a high school for 13 kids, but it's worked out very well," says Supt. Carl Peterson of the Alaska Gateway School District. "They had a fantastic time, and they're pleased with the children."

Eagle, on the Alaska-Canadian border 200 miles east of Fairbanks, was a trading center during the Klondike gold rush for miners and prospectors who objected to Canadian laws and taxes.

It actually consists of two villages, Eagle City and Eagle Village, about three miles apart on the Yukon River.

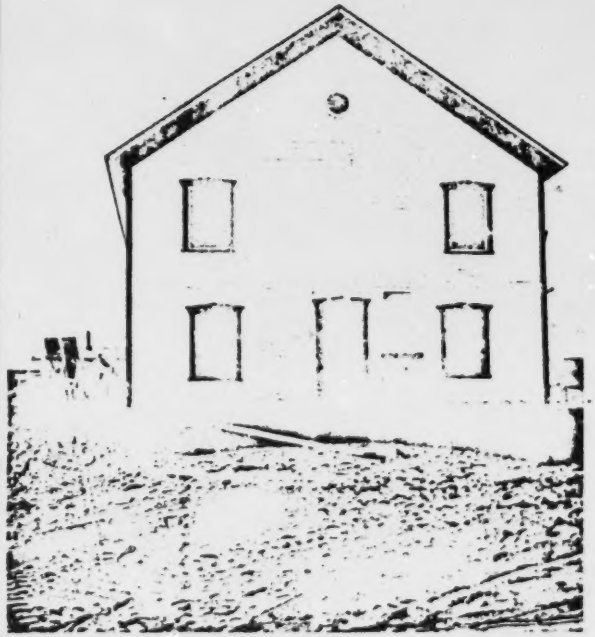
Ken and Judy Marlo, the teachers at Eagle, had a key role in the school project.

From the time school opened on Sept. 7 until the old Wickersham courthouse rang to the shouts of high school kids on a break from classes on Oct. 9, the high school was the Marlos' front room.

The courthouse, built around the turn of the century at Eagle City, needed substantial repairs to make it usable as a school.

The town anted up $7,000, and the local residents pitched in. Some of the labor was paid, but the bulk of the work was for free, and much came from the high school pupils.

"It was the first time that they had had the opportunity to go to school at home, and they certainly weren't going to miss it," said Louise Waller, a school board member from Eagle.



SCHOOL PROJECT—Thirteen students in Eagle, with some help from their elders, recently restored the historic Wickersham courthouse for use as a school, giving the small Alaskan town its first high school.

Civil Rights Office may pull REAA Funds

Tundra Times

4/20/77

The future of many federally funded education programs in Alaska may be in jeopardy unless state educators comply with specific provisions of the Civil Rights Act by June.

The Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) has begun administrative enforcement proceedings against the Alaska State Department of Education and the Regional Education Attendance Area (REAA) because of their failure to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the HEW regulation implementing the law.

The Director of HEW's Office for Civil Rights in Washington, D.C. notified Alaska Education Commissioner Marshall Lind that, "due to the State's continued failure to submit an acceptable plan for identifying the language of, and providing services to, students whose primary or home language is other than English, the Office for Civil Rights would, under the law, have to begin administrative enforcement proceedings."

By taking this action HEW will allow the State and REAA's an opportunity to respond to the allegations before an administrative hearing is held in Anchorage on June 6.

HEW also notified the State and REAA's that although present committments to provide funding for ongoing programs are unaffected, they will defer approval of any new applications or significant increases in the funding of continuing programs.

The Office of Civil Rights has required during the last eleven months that the Department of Education submit a detailed action plan which:

-Describes in reasonable detail how the Department of Education and REAA's will determine the primary or home language of students and assesses the relative language ability of such students in English and other language (s);

-Set forth measurable, minimum standards according to which the REAA's will develop and implement educational programs to repond to the students needs; and

-Sets timeframes for development and implementation of REAA educational plans which will assure effective educational programs for students whose primary or home language is other than English.

Just how did the State find itself in this situation?

According to one educator actively involved in the State's bilingual education program, the problem began sometine ago within the structure of the Alaska State Operated Schools System (SOS).

The source confided that internal turmoil at SOS prevented the Department of Bilingual Education from coming up with the material, and that some superintendents did not respond to a bilingual survey sent out by SOS because they 'didn't feel it was worth anything."

Continuing, the source said bilingual education was not a priority of the State, "It's just another supplementary education program."

"SOS didn't have a committment to bilingual education. Anytime anyone went to Juneau to bargain for money they were willing to trade dollars marked bilingual programs for other programs."

According to Silvia Carlsson of the Department of Education (DOE), the state has submitted three different plans to the Office of Civil Rights since November and all have been rejected.

"It appears that the first plan was probably not adequate," she said. "When the second plan was rejected we decided we needed more help with the procedures and asked the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (Portland) for assistance. They sent up two people and when the plan was finished we were confident we were headed in the right direction," Carlsson continued.

Submitting the latest plan, DOE has been verbally notified this plan has also been rejected.

Carlsson said they have received unofficial word that the Office of Civil Rights would not accept the plan until Bureau of Indian Affairs schools were brought into compliance. She maintains the state has no jurisdiction over the BIA schools and that BIA schools do not have to comply with state educational laws. Furthermore, the BIA schools are exempt from the Civil Rights Act.

DOE'S overall goal is to take an approved plan to each of the REAA's, let them rework it to fit their individual needs, and submit it as their educational plan. All of which must be completed within the next five weeks.

Should no acceptable plan be developed by the June 6 hearing, the Office of Civil Rights has the power to "stop the flow of every federal education dollar in the state for REAA's."

"No one has put down in black and white exactly what funds we're talking about," Carlsson said, "and we asked repeatedly for a list of programs."

Some programs which have been mentioned are: Title I of the Elementary and Secondary School Act; Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Act; Title IV, Indain Education; Johnson O'Malley; and PL-874-815 Funding to School Districts which have federal lands. These funds are for operational and construction expenses.

"We've been working with the Office of Civil Rights and HEW but we haven't been able to get anywhere. We don't disagree there is a problem, we're just not in agreement as to the formula to solve the problem."

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner 5/7/77

State unit delays decision on Railbelt recall election

The Alaska Board of Education, meeting in Fairbanks this week, decided it needs more information before it makes a decision on the petition for recalling three Upper Railbelt school board members.

Friday the board members asked Education Commissioner Marshall Lind to get them legal advice, saying the proceedings are without precedent in Alaska.

The question the board was concerned with was what the law requires regarding the charges and allegations to be placed on the recall ballot.

The petition claims that the board members have consistently voted against the will of the people and that they are incompetent. The board members have created a "turmoil" in the school district by taking uncompromising positions, the petition says.

The decision by the school board to buy a computer for the district was one of the bad decisions the board members made; another was establishing an administrative assistant's position to [illegible]d Supt. Larry Nyland, the petition charges.

The Upper Railbelt district includes schools in Anderson, Healy, Cantwell and Clear. The petition names Ed Frye, Gary Crabb and Ruby John as the board members to be recalled.

The statement of reasons for recalling, which is placed on the ballot, is to be as stated in the recall petition, according to the attorney general.

But state education board member Darwin Heine said he thinks the decision to by a computer or hire an assistant superintendent is a proper function of a school board.

Heine was concerned that any public body making an unpopular decision at a local level would be subject to recall if the state board sets a precedent by taking action for a recall election in the Upper Railbelt matter.

Lind said that after receiving advice from the attorney general's office he will call a special meeting as quickly as possible to dispose of the matter.

Department of Education Information Exchange

6/10/77

CSC CONCERNS OUTLINED

What questions should a regional school board ask itself as it develops policy for the community school committees? A small group of representatives from regional boards and the Department of Education met in Anchorage Tuesday and Wednesday to outline those questions. The meeting was the first step in developing materials for regional boards to use with their community school committees, according to Don McKinnon, school district relations specialist.

APPENDIX C

RELATED STUDIES, PROJECTS AND PUBLICATIONS

"Prefiled Testimony:
Alaska Village Electric Cooperative
Cost of Service Study"

This Alaska Public Utilities Commission Report contains prefiled testimony in the matter of filing a tariff revision by the Alaska Village Electric Cooperative, Inc. (AVEC), for a permanent rate increase. The November, 1977, report was prepared by Robert W. Retherford Associates and Arthur Young and Company.

This study was requested by the Governor and was funded by the Legislature. Its purpose was to establish the cost of service to each village served by AVEC and to recommend a revised rate structure for AVEC. Other parts of the study were a management audit and an engineering assessment of AVEC.

The need for the study, and the revised rate structures, was precipitated by the creation of Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAAs) and the problems associated with their contracting with AVEC for another ten years when the current State contract (originally entered for the benefit of state-operated schools) expires in July, 1978. AVEC serves 48 remote villages and in 1976 REAA and BIA revenues constituted 61 percent of AVEC's total revenue.

For further information:

Max Foster
Alaska Public Utilities Commission
MacKay Building
338 Denali Street
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
(907) 276-6222

Cross-Cultural Issues In Alaskan Education

This 165-page collection of articles was edited by Dr. Ray Barnhardt of the University of Alaska-Fairbanks' Department of Education. Dr. Barnhardt served as coordinator of the Cross-Cultural Education Development Program (X-CED) from 1970 to 1976, and several of the articles selected for inclusion in this book were written by staff and students of X-CED. $6.50

Topics and authors included in the publication are:

Part I Educational Policy Issues--
Eben Hopson, D.M. Murphy, and Kathryn Hecht

Part II Educational Development Issues--
Mike Gaffney, Steve Grubis, and Ray Barnhardt

Part III Community/School Issues--
Jim Stricks, Yupiktak Bista, Jan Gibson, and Ray Barnhardt

Part IV Teacher/Learning Issues--
Judith Kleinfeld, Conny Katasse, Paul Goodwin, and James Orvik

Part V Language Issues--
Vera Kaneshiro, James Orvik, Virginia Wilson, and Lary Schafer

The publication is available from:

Center for Northern Educational Research
University of Alaska-Fairbanks 99701
(907) 479-7145

The Governance, Organization, and Financing of Education for Alaska Natives

This report, written by Dr. Don M. Dafoe for the National Institute of Education (NIE), will be available for distribution following the NIE review process. Chapters in the 102-page report are as follows:

1. Factors Influencing Alaska's Educational Development
2. The Russian and Early U.S. Period: 1794-1900
3. The Creation of the Dual System: 1900-1917
4. Federal-Territorial Education and Relationships: 1917-1959
5. The First Decade of Statehood: 1959-1969
6. Current Status
7. Policy Issues
8. Research Questions

The report's appendices contain an extensive bibliography.

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Law and Alaska Native Education
and
A Primer on Laws Important to Alaska Native Education

The author of these two publications, David H. Getches, practices law in Colorado with the firm of Getches and Greene. Mr. Getches was associated with the Native American Rights Fund in Boulder, Colorado, and served as a Research Affiliate to the Center for Northern Educational Research (CNER). He has spent the past nine years in advocacy and litigation on behalf of Native Americans.

A Primer on Laws Important to Alaska Native Education (1976) is a 25-page publication providing basic information about the kinds of school systems in rural Alaska and gives answers to questions about funding programs, student and teacher rights, and other matters of interest to local education decision-makers. $2.00

Law and Alaska Native Education (1977) is a 39-page publication describing the influence of federal and state legislation upon the education of Alaska Natives. The major topics include: an evolutionary history of Alaska's parallel education systems; a listing of federal programs providing financial assistance; a discussion of localizing education and its control; a section on the prognosis of community control, Senate Bill 35 (Decentralization of the State-Operated School System), and the role of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. $3.50

Both publications are available from:

Center for Northern Educational Research
University of Alaska-Fairbanks 99701
(907) 479-7145

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Attorneys at Law
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Boulder, Colorado 80303

Small High School Project

This project is coordinated by Dr. Ray Barnhardt of the School of Education, University of Alaska-Fairbanks, with support provided by Howard Van Ness. It is a joint effort of the Alaska State Department of Education and the University of Alaska with support from a State General Fund Appropriation and a USOE Environmental Education grant.

The purposes of the Small High School Project are as follows:

1. To examine the socio-cultural environment in which young people grow up in rural Alaska communities

2. To develop a better understanding of the general conditions under which small high schools operate in rural Alaska school programs.

3. To identify programs and practices that appear to hold promise for addressing the conditions that exist in and around small rural high schools

4. To offer suggestions for the development of curriculum materials, certification standards, and teacher education programs appropriate to the needs of small high schools.

Ray Barnhardt
Cross-Cultural Education Development Program
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"Spatial Considerations for School Districts:
An Alaskan Case Study"

This study is being conducted by Mr. Larry Nyland, Superintendent of the Alaska Central Railbelt Schools, as part of a Ph.D. in Educational Administration at the University of Washington. The study should be completed during the summer of 1978.

Regional Educational Attendance Areas (REAAs) replaced the Alaska Unorganized Borough School District (AUBSD) as the result of legislative action. The actual spatial characteristics of the new districts came from the efforts of several agencies. The boundaries themselves were proposed by the Department of Community and Regional Affairs (DCRA) after taking public testimony and conferring with other agencies.

The result was twenty-one new districts that differed markedly in geographic size. Student enrollment ranged from fifty to thirteen hundred. Once regional boundaries were established and new boards elected, the districts were free to select a location for their district's office. In some cases these offices already existed while in others a first-time location decision was made.

The study uses the above conditions as a case study. The intent of the study is to show that high-speed computers and sophisticated programs can provide exact solutions to spatial problems. The primary focus is to minimize the distance traveled from the district offices to the outlying schools. The problem for the twenty-one district offices and one hundred thirty-four schools is at the outer limits of current technology.

Solutions generated by a computer program do not provide "answers" as much as provide another source of data for use in decision making. A series of programs could have provided DCRA, the Department of Education, and the communities involved with specific detail on travel costs, economies of scale, ethnic compositions, and other factors which might have assisted them in finding a low-cost solution to the question of where to place their district offices.

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"A Study of School Board Control in the REAAs
Compared to Non-REAA Districts"
(Tentative Title)

This study is being conducted by Mr. Don MacKinnon of the Alaska State Department of Education as part of a doctoral program at the University of Arizona. He anticipates completion of the study by the Fall of 1978.

The purpose of the study is to determine through interviews of school board members whether Regional Educational Attendance Area (REAA) boards perceive themselves as having the same, more, or less control of school affairs than do non-REAA school district boards.

An interview instrument has been developed which prioritizes the degrees of control a board can exhibit over four statutory areas: finance, personnel, instructional programs, and school facilities and construction.

The highest degree of control manifested by the board is setting policy and goal functions. The second level is reflected in a loss of board control when policy and goal setting is done by administrative personnel. The lowest level is illustrated when policy and goal setting is done by state and federal agencies.

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APPENDIX D

MAP OF ALASKA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

July 1, 1976

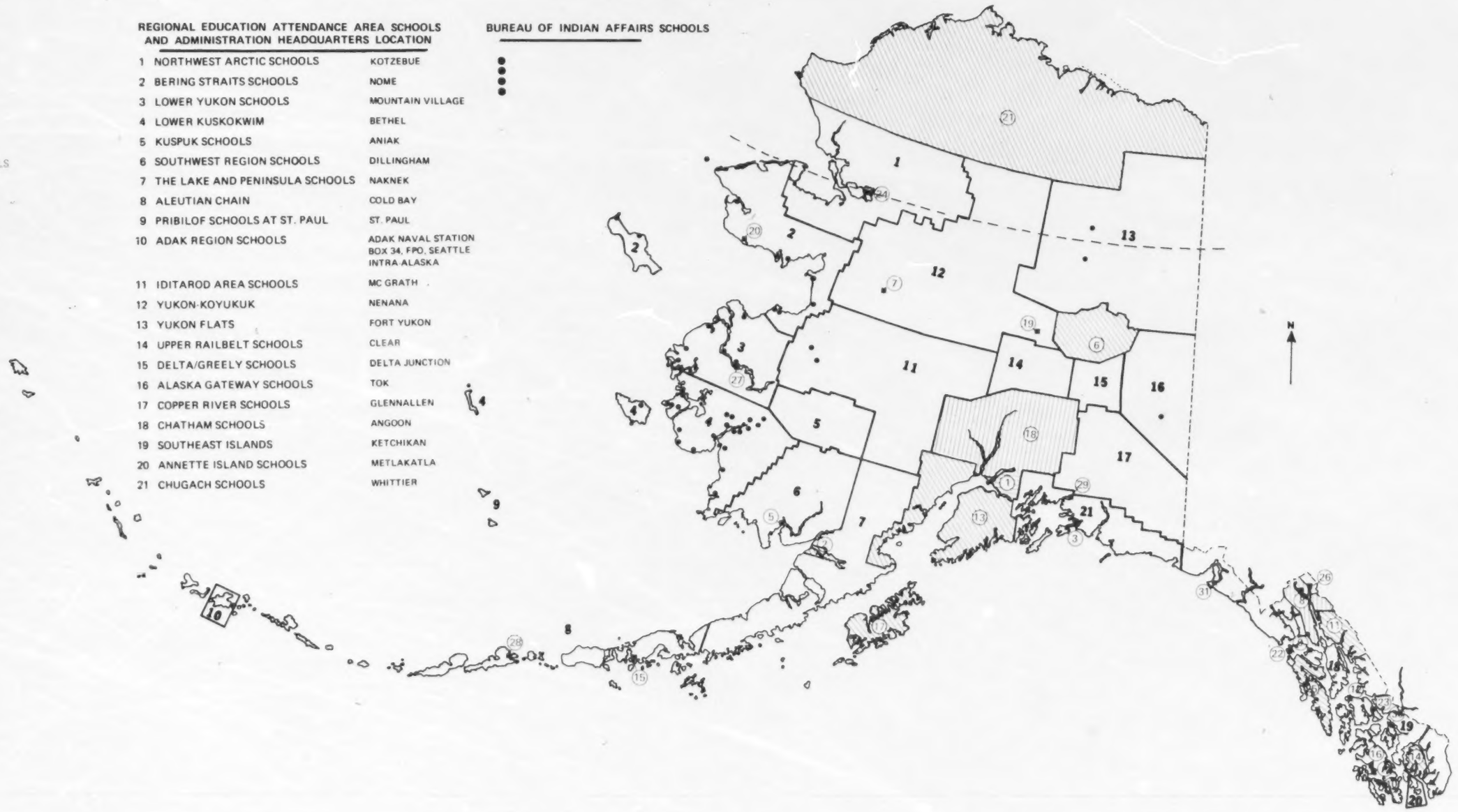
LOCATION OF SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN ALASKA - JULY 1, 1976

BOROUGH AND CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

1. ANCHORAGE BOROUGH SCHOOLS
2. BRISTOL BAY BOROUGH SCHOOLS
3. CORDOVA CITY SCHOOLS
4. CRAIG CITY SCHOOLS
5. DILLINGHAM CITY SCHOOLS
6. FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH SCHOOLS
7. GALENA CITY SCHOOLS
8. HAINES BOROUGH SCHOOLS
9. HOONAH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
10. HYDABURG CITY SCHOOLS
11. GREATER JUNEAU BOROUGH SCHOOLS
12. KAKE CITY SCHOOLS
13. KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOLS
14. KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH SCHOOLS
15. KING COVE CITY SCHOOLS
16. KLAWOCK CITY SCHOOLS
17. KODIAK ISLAND BOROUGH SCHOOLS
18. MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH SCHOOLS
19. NENANA CITY SCHOOLS
20. NOME CITY SCHOOLS
21. NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH SCHOOLS
22. PELICAN CITY SCHOOLS
23. PETERSBURG CITY SCHOOLS
24. SELAWIK CITY SCHOOLS
25. GREATER SITKA BOROUGH SCHOOLS
26. SKAGWAY CITY SCHOOLS
27. ST. MARY'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS
28. UNALASKA CITY SCHOOLS
29. VALDEZ CITY SCHOOLS
30. WRANGELL CITY SCHOOLS
31. YAKUTAT CITY SCHOOLS

REGIONAL EDUCATION ATTENDANCE AREA SCHOOLS AND ADMINISTRATION HEADQUARTERS LOCATION	
1 NORTHWEST ARCTIC SCHOOLS	KOTZEBUE
2 BERING STRAITS SCHOOLS	NOME
3 LOWER YUKON SCHOOLS	MOUNTAIN VILLAGE
4 LOWER KUSKOKWIM	BETHEL
5 KUSPUK SCHOOLS	ANIAK
6 SOUTHWEST REGION SCHOOLS	DILLINGHAM
7 THE LAKE AND PENINSULA SCHOOLS	NAKNEK
8 ALEUTIAN CHAIN	COLD BAY
9 PRIBILOF SCHOOLS AT ST. PAUL	ST. PAUL
10 ADAK REGION SCHOOLS	ADAK NAVAL STATION BOX 34, FPO, SEATTLE INTRA-ALASKA
11 IDITAROD AREA SCHOOLS	MC GRATH
12 YUKON-KOYUKUK	NENANA
13 YUKON FLATS	FORT YUKON
14 UPPER RAILBELT SCHOOLS	CLEAR
15 DELTA/GREELY SCHOOLS	DELTA JUNCTION
16 ALASKA GATEWAY SCHOOLS	TOK
17 COPPER RIVER SCHOOLS	GLENNALLEN
18 CHATHAM SCHOOLS	ANGOON
19 SOUTHEAST ISLANDS	KETCHIKAN
20 ANNETTE ISLAND SCHOOLS	METLAKATLA
21 CHUGACH SCHOOLS	WHITTIER

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS SCHOOLS



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